THE BIG NATIONAL FICTION MAGAZINE
TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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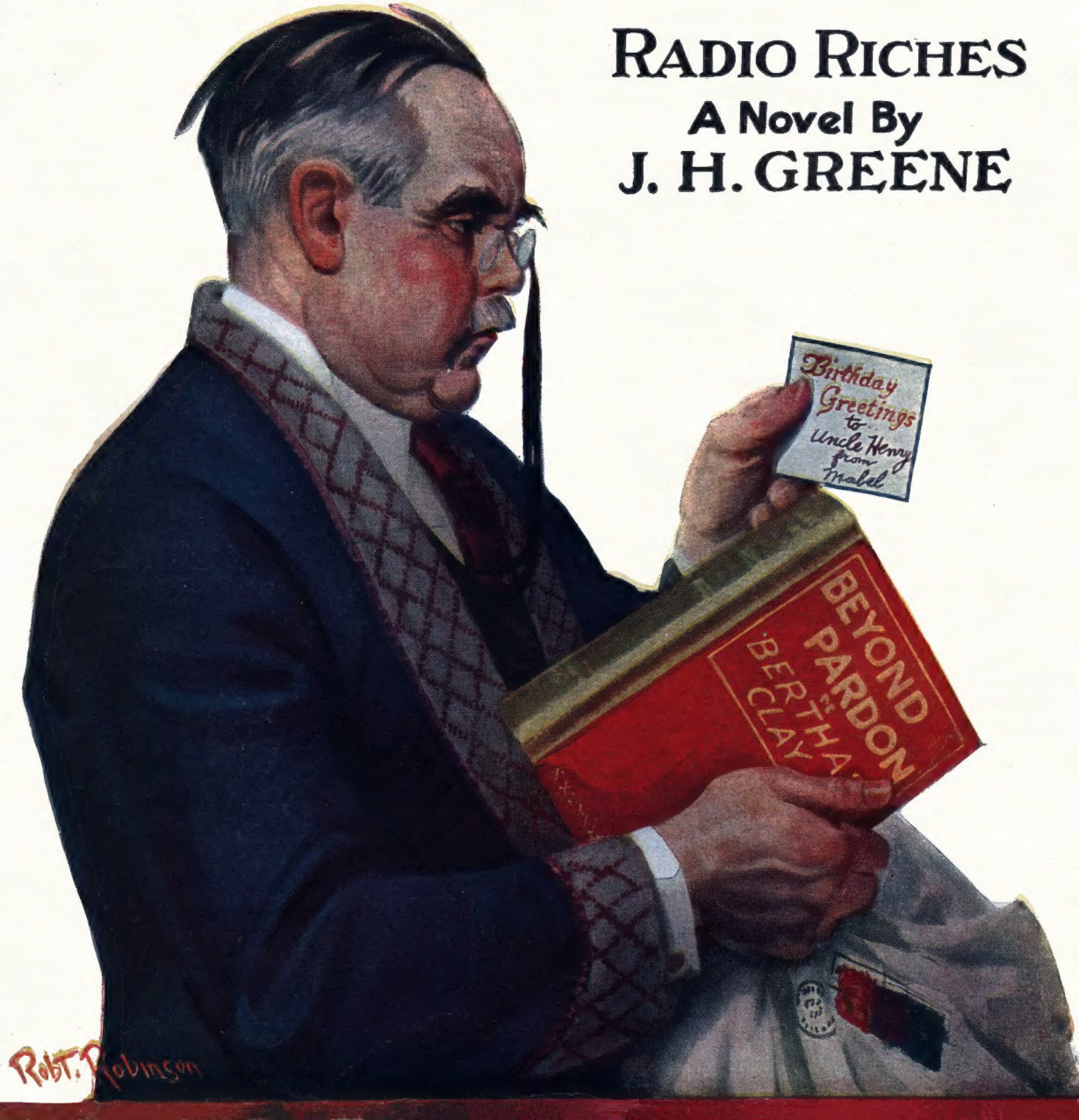
JUNE 7, 1925

25 cts.

RADIO RICHES

A Novel By

J. H. GREENE



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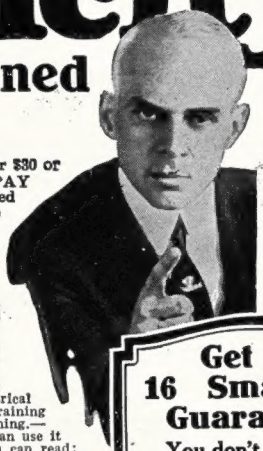

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Just send me your name and I will tell you how to start on this proposition, even if you can devote only one or two hours a day to it. Later on, when you find out how much money you can make and how delightful the work is, then you will want to put in your full time.

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Don't wait until someone else gets in ahead of you. Just mail the coupon and I will send you all the details of my offer. I will show you how you can have a permanent, profitable, honorable and pleasant business that will bring you a bigger income than the average merchant, doctor, lawyer or banker. I will show you how you can make $200 a week without working as hard as you are now. Don't miss this chance. Tear out the coupon and mail it to me right away. This is the big money-making opportunity you have been waiting for.

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A dramatic blending of science and adventure in the North.

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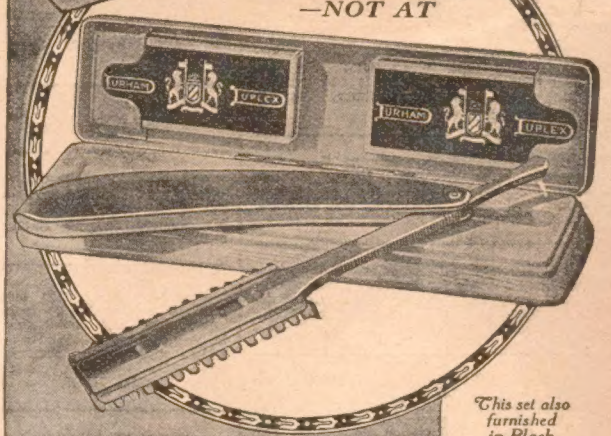

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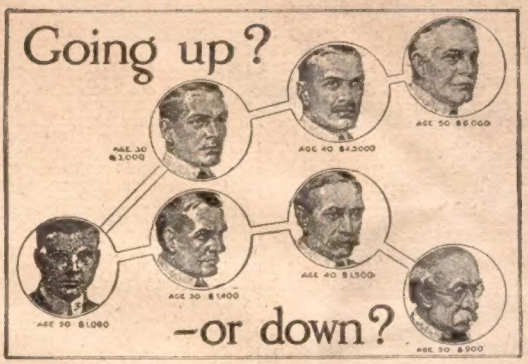

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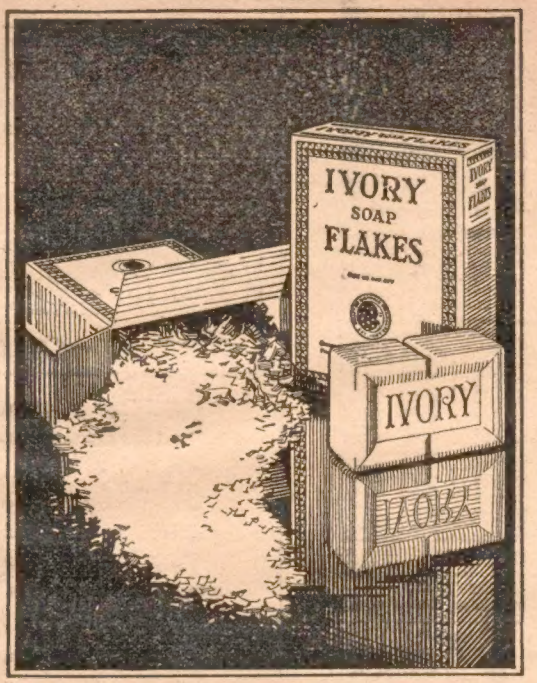

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXVI. JUNE 7, 1925. No. 4

Radio Riches

By J. H. Greene

Author of "According to His Lights," "The Original Prospector," Etc.

The story of a gallant and appealing young man of the North Woods who carried a crystal set into the wilderness with him to ease his loneliness. It was the most rudimentary form of radio receiver. Yet its owner, Pierre Ladouceur, picked up calls from stations hundreds of miles away. The extraordinary power of the simple crystal set meant nothing to him until chance brought a man to his lonely cabin who saw deeply into the mystery and translated it into a fortune.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE PARCEL.

THE conductor was objecting to the long spar with the sailcloth lashed round it that Pierre was trying to carry onto the train.

"Put that in the baggage car. This is a smoker, not a furniture van."

"But I tak' heem from Mon'real, m'sieu'."

"You're in Ontario now. Don't argue. Don't start a fight. Looks as if you had a stomach full as it is. Hurry; we pull out in thirty seconds."

Pierre was trying to understand why the allotment of personal baggage should change with railroads, with provinces; but his cut lips perverted his polite smile; his flashing French eyes looked fierce and ugly out of his bruised features. He had to obey this pink-faced North Briton from Toronto.

"You watch dese, m'sieu'," he said,

pointing to the island of hand baggage he had deposited by the step of the car.

The conductor grinned at the passengers who had been held up by the altercation.

"These habitants think every one is going to rob them. But last time I was in Montreal I was cleaned out by a pretty little doll——"

The conductor was not able to finish his reflections on Quebec before Pierre returned, racing. He hooked his fingers round his grip and the strings of his parcels and leaped on the car just in time, holding on by his head, his elbows, and his knees.

His progress down the car brought him into more trouble. He took off one man's hat with a corner of his grip, and knocked a magazine from the hands of another. But dropping apologies right and left, he reached the end seat.

He then threw his grip into the rack carelessly, but began placing his parcels as if they were precious and breakable. Two especially gave him much trouble—one a cubical bundle in brown paper lashed with much string, and the other a round one.

The latter he finally hooked on the ornamental end of the rack but the other he kept changing from the rack to the seat beside him, where his arm closed round it. Becoming weary of this, he placed it solidly on the rack.

Then, after a furtive glance at the passengers behind him—dark-mustached French, pink-faced, porridge-fed Scots, lumbermen from the mills in English tweeds and bulging pockets, men in hunting outfits, a solemn-looking Indian, a priest reading his red-edged breviary, a tourist or two, mining men going to the North—and satisfied that none of them knew him, Pierre lounged back into his seat to enjoy the vistas of the Ottawa River and the Laurentian heights beyond.

He sprawled like an active man, like a relaxed hound, his long legs wide apart, his arms spread over the seat. He was tall and lithe; dark by inheritance and the sun; with thin-edged features that looked rather ridiculous under his new fedora.

His frame had not the stumpy build of the peasant. It called for a uniform of some kind, as his face suggested a helmet; for his eyes lit at the gleaming reaches of the river with the eagerness of his fighting, hunting, praying and proselytizing ancestors; the men who sang when they died; who could jest when burning at the stake of the Huron; who had been courtiers and became conquerors under the leadership of that man whose statue stands forever in the Place d'Armes—the heroic Maisonneuve.

"Shove over, son. Ain't paying for two seats, are you?" said a heavy voice, and Pierre looked up. The laxity dropped from him as he stiffened in his seat and his hands came to action front.

"You——"

The somber, scowling face looked down lit likewise with the same surly recognition.

"Why, it's Pierre—what's your name? Pierre Ladouceur. Saw it in the papers."

Pierre's face sharpened to an ax blade as he spoke softly without yielding an inch of the seat.

"I no sit by you, m'sieu'. But we no fight here."

"I ain't going to fight nowhere. Move over and let's talk it over."

THE man was tall and heavy with the round shoulders of a laborer. His open shirt betrayed a hairy chest; his new beard was not thick enough to soften his snarling mouth and the old cut under his chin. But despite his sinister overbearing massiveness he was trying to be genial.

"When you ran into me with that spritsail yard on Carandolet Street I naturally objected. I was only defending myself. I didn't mean to bowl over any one with the butt. 'Twasn't my fault it started a street fight. I'm a peaceful man. Street fights are no good, anyway."

"De poleece put me in jail after breaking my head. I 'ave to pay ten dollar. I mak' you pay dat ten dollar some time, m'sieu'."

Pierre was smiling, but his tan went a shade whiter and his teeth carved his words.

"Oh, don't be a sorehead. Let's talk it over."

The man swung his grip into the rack over Pierre's head; it was bulging and weighted with straps; it crushed down on Pierre's lighter case, jolted the cubical parcel he had placed so carefully and tore the circular one away from the rack.

"M'sieu'!" cried Pierre, sharply enough to make the priest look up from his breviary; and then reached for that grip and tossed it into the aisle.

The forced smile of the owner of the grip hardened to a bite, his hairy gorilla-like hands clenched and unclenched as he was about to reach for Pierre till he checked himself on becoming aware of the attention he had aroused in the car. The brakeman had paused by the door; two Scotsmen in the next seat had stopped a discussion reeking with statistics; the Indian had turned his jetlike stare on this quarrel of two apparently drunken habitants.

The scowling starter of the quarrel was cooled by this publicity. He drew his cap over his face and picked up his grip.

"All right, Johnny Canuck. Keep your blasted seat. I didn't mean to hurt whatever ye've got there. We can't fight in smoking cars, nuther."

He then went down the car with his head lowered, covering his retreat with grins.

"All right. Johnny has a hang over. He can have the whole car as far as I'm concerned," he said to the brakeman.

Then he went into the next coach.

After rehanging the circular parcel and examining the other to see that it had not been crushed, Pierre resumed his easy attitude to soothe his temper on the golds and greens, the scarlets and russets of the woods in their fall splendor.

The train passed lumber towns with acres of sawn planks gleaming to the sun and scenting the air with resins; little depots where men got on with strings of shining trout, and bags stuffed with furs and feathers and stained with red spots; where between the grunts of the engine Pierre could count the calls of the birds that had not yet started south for the winter.

But he drew back when he saw the carts and buggies of the farmers; he was coming near home; the prettiest girl sitting on a load of apples would not tempt him to look out and exchange a smile, for his name was in a police report.

But at Isle de Loup a man called up at him from the platform and he looked down at the fat, smiling face of old Hector Trudelle.

HECTOR was getting on the train; Pierre would give him his own version of the row in Carandolet Street; to offset that little paragraph in *La Presse* that would be a scarehead of scandal to all who knew him round Du Chene.

"Where you been, Pierre? Mon'real?"

"Yes, m'sieu'," said Pierre, making room for the old man, who took up a great deal.

Hector, with the absorption of the aged, did not give any attention to Pierre's battered face.

"You com' back. You always com' back. Eet mooch bettaire at Du Chene. Mon'real no more Canayen. Too mooch Anglais. Too mooch Yankee. Too mooch lak Toronto. No good. You see Mimi?"

"Yes, m'sieu'."

The old habitant's eyes twinkled as they now fell on Pierre's new fedora and he fingered the cloth of Pierre's new Burberry overcoat.

"Why you buy heem?" he asked. "No good winter. No want summer. Mimi mak' you lak Anglais, eh?"

"Yes, m'sieu'."

"*My girls just sam'. All tam want* t'ings from Mon'real, Toronto, Chicago. No more mak' der own. No more weave own clot'. No more girl stay home, no more lak mothers.

"My Zoe go to Buffalo, and now she want to cook by dese eelectreecity. She say dese Yankees mak' Niagara do all de work. Dey want Niagara all for dem-

selves. By gar, I t'ink de world com' soon to beeg smash."

Old Hector shook his white head sadly, and then for the first time noticed Pierre's cut lips and bruised face.

"Ah, your Mimi scratch your face—eh, mon Pierre?"

"No, m'sieu', that was a policeman. I get in trouble and had to pay fine of ten dollar. I nearly go jail for a month. But the policeman was not a Canayen. Toronto feller. His French mak' the judge laugh, so I get off easy."

Hector was not shocked at this recital, for he was too intent on his own business.

"Ah, mon Pierre, why you no marry Canayen girl? I give you twenty acres best land wit' one of my girls. Any one you lak. Why you go spark dis singing girl, dis cabaret chanteuse?"

Pierre was aroused from the quiescent way he had taken the old man's catechising.

"M'sieu' Hector, you no say dat t'ing. Mimi good girl. She no what you t'ink. She good Canayen, but she lak Yankees, lak your girls. She want mak' money and be beeg lady.

"She no sing in cabaret now. She sing in Notre Dame Sundays. I hear her sing de Sanctus last Sunday. Soon she sing to all de world, m'sieu'. Yes, m'sieu', all de world."

Hector shook his head at Pierre's extravagant enthusiasm.

"Then why you com' back? Why you leave her? Why you no live in Mon'real? Why you no open shop and sell tobac' or skins and be waiter in cabaret and hear Mimi sing all time?

"By Gar, I t'ink you beeg dam fool. You love his girl and you leave her. What good you do for her back in woods? All right be fool for girl when you go town, but when you get on train—tra-la-la, mamselle.

"You com' see my girls. You all 'lone in cabane. Man must have *blonde* in winter. You forget stove. She say, 'Pierre, eet is cold.' You wak' up tend stove. Eef you have no *femme* you freeze. You die lak wolf in trap cos you no tak' one my girls!"

The old man's match-making homily was interrupted by the train's slowing down for Du Chene. Pierre had listened without further resentment as he gazed out at the pageantry of the woods. He had to admit Hector's logic; he was running away from Mimi; he had nowhere else but the woods to go to; he could not work or even breathe in a city.

He and she had parted with tenderness, without reproaches, even with hypocritical hopes that Bonne Fortune would bring them together again. But both were frugal, practical, logical, fact-facing French; both knew there was no way out of their dilemma.

Pierre was a habitant farmer, unhappy and incapable away from his cabin and out of the woods. He had been satisfied to scrape a bare living from his tobacco, his vegetables, a few furs, and occasional jobs for summer sportsmen; even his *blonde*, his Mimi, could not make him dissatisfied altogether with that existence. But Mimi had been caught up by city life; she had taken to it with that adaptability that is making women the latest adventurers in our world.

THE train reached Du Chene. After gathering up his parcels Pierre hastened to the baggage car. Hector drove off in the buggy that had been awaiting him. Pierre avoided further converse with the old man, who would have questioned him about that spar with the sailcloth and his precious parcels.

Pierre had stores to buy which added fifty pounds to his load. Louis, the storekeeper, put no questions about his cut face; Louis had not read the Montreal paper, and young farmers that go into town frequently return with such souvenirs.

Pierre's last business was with the post office. He expected much mail this winter, for Mimi promised to write to him.

"Eef eet snow big," he said to the postmaster, "you keep the letters. I lose my horse and I have to walk. But only keep

Mon'real letters. Ottawa and Hamilton you put in stove, eh?"

Pierre had been accustomed to taking trips to these towns also, but Mimi had wiped out those towns and their memories. But remembering his last talk with Mimi he revoked his order.

"Better keep dem all, m'sieu'. Maybe I get letter from all the world."

For he remembered that Mimi was not like the girls of those other towns. She, the unattached, the untethered, could talk as familiarly of Boston and New York as if she had lived there. She was at home in the world; she soon would be singing to all the world; she had changed her address three times since she had gone to live in Montreal.

"Hello, Pierre. I see you've been raising hell in Montreal."

Larry, the telegraph operator, spoke from the doorway; he had *La Presse* in his hand. Pierre gave his version of the fight in Carandolet Street.

"By Gar, Larry, dis feller slip away from police and mak' me pay all de dam fine——"

"What are you doing with all that wire? Going to make fox traps? Rather expensive for chicken coops, ain't it?"

Larry was fingering the circular parcel Pierre had hooked over his arm by tearing out the center of the paper. Pierre tried to get it away from him; he seemed smitten dumb and his fine skin flushed as if he had been caught with something shameful.

"Say, bo, you ain't fallen for radio?" cried Larry, as he uncovered the parcel farther and saw, beside the copper wire that had first attracted his attention, some coils of the insulated wire that is used only for electrical purposes. Larry verified his guess by feeling the cubical parcel Pierre was carefully clasping. These two Pierre had carried with him on his rounds, leaving the rest of his purchases at the store.

"Radio!" sneered Larry, as he touched a dial under the paper.

"Hush, Larry. I no want people know. Old Hector say I crazy already. Maybe de curé say I go to de bad. Eef we have bad winter, eef de cows die, eef some one get sick dey blame me. Maybe de curé I must go do penance at St. Anne de Beaupré and walk de holy stairs on my knees. Larry, please don't tell no one."

Pierre in urgent whispers pleaded for his secret.

"All right; I won't give you away. But do you know how to fix it?"

"I got book. I see de leetle boys in Mon'real work on de roofs. Eef she no work, you come and help me."

"I don't know nothing about it," said Larry, shaking his head sourly. "I did once, but it has got away from me. I'm agin' it. It's all bunk; and it's going to put us telegraph operators out of business. But if you're going to fall for that broadcasting ballyhoo and let the dealers load you with new hook-ups every time they spring the latest set, that's your funeral. But that's what the game is—bunk."

But Pierre's enthusiasm was not easily damped.

"I hear my girl in Mon'real. She sing and I hear her. De man say I can."

"Pierre, radio salesmen are million-kilowatt liars. But don't let me discourage you. I won't say nothing. Play all you want, but I can't help you. I can't keep up with it and I ain't going to try."

The pessimistic Larry went back to his office which combined the trade of the Western Union with the routine business of his railroad.

Pierre had turned to the store and loaded himself with his bundles. He hooked the wire over the arm that held the spar, slung his bag of supplies over his shoulder, and hugged his radio set with his other hand.

He took the road Hector had driven along, but turned off to a trail when he sighted Hector's roofs. The trail led through woods just outside the old man's clearings.

He could see some of Hector's many daughters busy in the fields and round the doors. Ordinarily he would have gone in to drink coffee and maybe sip wine, but now he wanted to make no more explana-

tions. These women would have wanted to see the inside of every one of his parcels and would have laughed at the clothes he had bought to go walking with Mimi.

Hector's dogs scented him and began barking. One of the women called, perhaps having sighted him among the maples. Pierre turned into a narrow and more closely wooded trail to escape.

This trail was very narrow and tortuous. It was difficult to avoid entangling that long spar with the overhanging branches and close underwood.

He heard a shot close by and he hastened to avoid that hunter, for he knew every one for miles and would have to explain what he was doing with those expensive coils of copper wire that were now half stripped of their paper by the brambles.

THE roar of rapids began to reach his ears; but above them through the whispering leaves over his head his keen ears caught something else—the sound of boots breaking through twigs. He stopped and they stopped too.

Some one was trailing him. The discovery that a man's steps were timed to his, that out of the dense undergrowth some one was watching him, thrilled Pierre, brought him back to the woods where he belonged.

Even a city man in a lonely street will turn if he hears another man keeping pace with him, but where a city man grows cold and looks for police or a weapon, Pierre was exhilarated. He divested himself of his encumbrances. He felt more alive as if every one of his faculties were strung to a higher tension.

It was love of these moments, few enough in woods now being tamed by cultivation, that made Pierre desert the city; what was not in the woods now he could supply from his imagination where the crash of a branch, the rush of padded feet could bring back the delight in danger, the thrill of being threatened, to this grandson of a coureur des bois.

As stealthily as his forbears would have tricked a Huron he placed his bundles back in the brush and grasped the spar as his more distant forbears would have put a lance in rest. That spar was his only weapon.

He was only a few miles from Hector's and an hour or so from Du Chene; tramps did not frequent these woods; violence was rare, but it might come. He remembered tales from the North. Those Yankees, those Toronto men who were opening up the new Ontarios, sometimes did violent things when land was wanted. Habitants who came from the lower provinces had been terrorized, dispossessed, even killed; and the verdicts had always been heart failure. The instinct that tells a hunter when he is hunted made sensitive antennas of every nerve in Pierre's body.

The instinct was not false, for some bird stopped singing above his head; a rabbit ran out of the brush; a startled squirrel scratched up a spruce; and down the trail emerged a man. He was the big, grim, slouching fellow Pierre had met on the train that morning, and he carried a rifle slung over his shoulder.

NOW his pursuer had broken cover the tingling in Pierre's nerves ceased. Nonchalantly he stepped out of the brush. At the stir of the twigs the man swung his rifle to his shoulder with the snap of a soldier, but lowered it the moment he recognized the debonair young habitant. He offered his lopsided grin.

"You're taking chances, son, springing on a man like that. I'm a little green to this country and its varmints. I might have plugged you."

"For why you follow me, m'sieu'?"

The man slung his rifle back over his shoulder.

"Do you want to hog these woods like you did that seat in the car?"

Pierre took in the slack of his belt and kicked a place free of brambles to make a stand in.

"We finish our fight, m'sieu'. No police interfere here. You no slip away dis tam," he said, with his polite smile.

He would have disliked this man at first sight anywhere. The fellow would have

aroused all the antagonism in him, and after the affair in Carandolet Street the feeling was not altogether prejudice. But the man made no move and only chuckled heavily.

"My! You're a scrappy French cock-a-doodle-doo, ain't you? I don't want to fight you. What's the use? I'd have accepted your invite when I was younger, but I don't fight no more unless there's coin in it. Not then, if I can get the coin without bruising me dukes! Cool off, son, and lemme give you a hand with your swag."

The man's cool drawl brought back common sense to Pierre. After all, he had been the aggressor. He remembered that after that gloomy parting with Mimi he had been ready to fight with anything and everybody. He grew ashamed of his suspicions, for the man was examining his bundles and evidently serious in his desire to help in true backwoods friendliness.

"The best way will be to sling 'em on that pole and you and me carry chink fashion."

He had begun to slip the shoulder straps of Pierre's store bag over the pole.

"M'sieu', I no want you do dis t'ing for me——" began Pierre awkwardly.

The man went on working without looking up from his self-appointed task.

"It's nothing. I got you into chokee, didn't I? Suppose you'd be insulted and want to fight a duel with me if I offered to pay half your fine? You Canucks are as touchy as fulminate. I ain't offering, but suppose I do? Does that mean scrap too?"

The man spoke with a sedate superiority that stirred the quick Canadian to penitence.

"No, m'sieu'. We forget dat meestake and you come along to my cabane."

"Right-o. My name is Jake Grant. Pleased to meet you. Now let's hop along."

The two hoisted the spar on their shoulders and wound easily and rapidly along the trail.

"How far is your shack?" said Jake, after they had traveled some distance, and mainly uphill, for the lowlands were giving place to the terraces and the trail often was broken with boulders and fallen trunks.

"About twenty mile," said Pierre.

"Hell, matey, I ain't a coolie. I thought your camp was close by."

Jake had stopped and relieved his shoulder from the loaded spar. Strong as he was, his frame had not acquired the callouses necessary for that mode of portage.

"We only one mile to rapides," said Pierre. "Then we tak' canoe."

"What are you going to do with the sail?" asked Jake, after they had resumed their march.

"I t'ink I try heem on my canoe some time. Maybe in winter I mak' ice boat."

SOON they came out onto the banks of the river by the tossing rapids pouring down the water from the terraces. Pierre drew a canoe out of the bushes and launched it. He then stepped into the middle, resting the blade of the paddle on the bottom of the shallows to preserve his balance.

He sat down and asked Jake to pass him his stores. The bag, loaded with hams, a new frying pan, flour, sugar and coffee, brought the canoe low in the water. The addition of the spar needed careful handling to distribute the weight.

"Now de other parcels, m'sieu', and you get in."

"That cockleshell won't hold me. She's down to her gunwale already."

In passing Pierre the cubical parcel Jake in his distrust dropped it into the water. The eddies by the bank immediately carried it to the dipping waters at the top of the rapids.

"Dieu—she spoil!" cried Pierre, trying to pole after it.

"Stay where you are; you'll spill!" cried Jake, running along the bank.

The parcel was floating slowly between diverse currents. It tottered for a moment, held by the edge of a black rock preparatory to a plunge down the shining torrent to the fierce foaming pools below.

Jake was able to hop out over the rocks,

rescue it and hand it over to Pierre, who had skillfully poled his canoe to the dangerous edge of the rapids. Pierre then shot the canoe back to the bank with one blow of the paddle and began tearing the wet paper off the parcel.

"I t'ink she no hurt," he murmured relievedly.

"What in thunder have you got there? You came near spilling yourself and a month's supplies."

"Eet is a radio, m'sieu'. I buy heem in Mon'real. I sooner lose supplies than heem. I t'ank you ver' much, m'sieu'."

Jake stood staring at the box now nakedly displaying its bakelite and its tuning dial.

"Radio," he murmured. "Are you lying? Then what is this?"

Without a word of apology he tore off the rest of the paper from the circular parcel that was still lying on the bank. When he saw the coil of clean copper wire Pierre had brought for his aërial, the smaller coil of covered wire for his lead in, Jake threw the parcel into the canoe with an oath.

"Radio! Huh! That's one on me. I won't risk a trip in that dugout this time, matey. Maybe I'll find your shack some day. Where is it?"

"Top of de lak'. Stone house; only stone house round here. You come. I give you good time."

Pierre pushed off, poling along the bank till he reached the broad waters of the lake, waters free of current, where he could paddle. Jake stood a long time looking after him, rubbing his sore shoulders and murmuring "Radio!" with the intense disgust of a man who has followed a false trail.

CHAPTER II.

THE CRYSTAL SET.

FROM the knoll on which his cabin stood Pierre looked at the big smoke to the northwest. The smoke had not the swift drift of a forest fire, for the mushroom-shaped cloud seemed rooted to one spot.

He looked anxiously at his fields, at his cabin, at the thick woods beyond, now thinned of their gold-and-scarlet tinsel by the advance gusts of winter.

The cabin was one of the old fur-trading depots, solidly built of stone, still showing its white paint under its creepers. But his outhouses, his stables, his still ungathered corn could easily be burned; he himself could be roasted alive in that house as an oyster in its shell.

The trails leading into the woods, the earth up to the edge of the brown waters of the lake were matted with heaps of dry leaves—fit fuel for the gathering wind. But as he listened, strained by anxiety, he heard only the plunge of trout, the gossip of duck, the buzz of the black fly.

A deep, secure silence pervaded the woods; no scurrying wild things broke cover to announce a forest fire; there was no panic in the underbrush. But to make sure he took the trail leading toward that smoke.

It was dark before a blaze gleamed between the trunks which grew thinner on the more barren uplands. The fire was off the trail and he had to part the brush to come closer. He heard voices and went slowly and silently, taking care not to trip over matted trunks and plunge into boggy moss holes.

He saw and he could feel the blaze and the heat of a dangerous fire built in the hollow left by an uprooted oak that had been torn from the soil in some late storm. Behind the fire writhed the tangle of roots still moist with sap, and steaming.

Trees covered with dry foliage stood very near; their brown leaves were shuddering as if already flames. Only the shelter of those mighty roots clotted with the moist soil they had lifted prevented those flames and cinders from blowing out into miles of ready tinder. Two men were talking loudly in front of the fire.

"The affair's a swindle, Sir Charles. There's more silver in one cashier's drawer in Threadneedle Street than in this whole blasted country."

"Anglais," murmured Pierre.

The speaker was unmistakably imported. Only Englishmen toasted their backs at fires like that; Pierre had often

laughed at their ways when he had looked in through the windows of the Château Laurier. The speaker was small, slight and young.

Pierre moved to get a look at Sir Charles. He saw a burly, elderly man dressed only in a shirt, kneeling before the fire and sheltering his face from the blaze with the trousers he was drying. Other garments were spread round the edge of the hollow; evidently the party had tumbled into some river or the lake.

"Damn the flies," said the older man.

Sir Charles was kept busy slapping his bare shanks. He reached for his underwear and struggled into it, trying to beat off the pests.

"I believe the mosquitoes actually thrive on this country's tobacco. It's worse than Algerian dried rope."

The young man was making his defense by puffing hard at his pipe, but the green leaf gave little smoke.

"I believe your way of drying your clothes on you is better, Cecil, but unfortunately rheumatism is a factor when one is fifty. Why, the little beasts are actually boring through my Jaegers."

The older man protested against the flies with some sportive good nature, as if he admired the enterprise of that cloud of winged and stinging annoyances drawn upon them by the fire. The younger man merely erupted complaints and curses on everything colonial.

Pierre would have let them suffer gladly. These Anglais were spoiling the cities and the acres of his fathers. In his house was an old musket his grandfather had borne in the Papineau rebellion. Hereditary hatreds live in the backwoods. But he could not leave these two men there all night; that was contrary to backwoods hospitality.

WHEN Cecil lit another match and threw it away burning, Pierre had to step forward. The match started a creeping blaze in the dry grass edging the hollow. Cecil was about to repeat the crime with another match when the face of Pierre confronted his; his hand was roughly seized and the match taken from his fingers.

"M'sieu' no do dat," said Pierre softly, though his eyes blazed in the firelight. "De woods—she burn. Always dis way, m'sieu'."

Pierre blew out the dangerous wax vesta, bent it as if it were wood, spat on the head and then threw it away. He then leaped out of the hollow and began stamping out the burning grass—without any apology to Cecil.

"I say, you knocked my match box in the fire!" cried Cecil querulously, for his wrist was sore from Pierre's grasp. He had been humiliated, almost assaulted.

"M'sieu' burn dese woods: Maybe we have another grand fire. De woods, de farms, maybe de people burn because m'sieu' beeg dam fool."

A volley of cries and oaths came from Sir Charles with all the fervor and fluency of elderly gentlemen robbed of their equanimity. He had been awakened to his and Cecil's carelessness by the almost frightened way Pierre was stamping out the burning grass and leaves; and though still in his bare feet he had started to help Pierre—in Pierre's way.

"You've got your boots on, Cecil. Help him to put out this fire at once, I say."

Though hopping about on his singed soles, though still in his ridiculous undress, despite the flies that never intermitted their torture, Sir Charles was able to command Cecil to forget his indignities.

"It was my patent match box, Sir Charles."

"You—and I also, to be perfectly fair—are a couple of patent cockney jackasses. This gentleman is quite right. We are fools. We owe him an apology, match box or no match box. What would you say if he lit a bonfire in your park, assuming you had a park?"

Pierre liked the burly Englishman with the white beard that just now was rather in need of trimming, but Cecil he wished to throw into the fire along with his match box.

"Fact is," continued Sir Charles, "we've been traveling down from Cobalt. I know

a little—very little, to be precise—of the country. Cecil knows nothing at all, but he considerately advised me to tackle the expedition without a guide.

"The net result is that we've lost our canoe, most of our supplies, and ourselves. Profit is, we've gained some knowledge of entomology and I shall have to go on crutches when I reach London, assuming I do reach London. Now if you can help us out of this ghastly mess——"

"M'sieu' can come to my cabane."

"Awfully obliged. Cecil, pack up what's left. You'll have to carry everything. My feet are raw.

"But first, of course, extinguish that fire. We never actually leave fires burning—we do know that much," he added to Pierre.

Cecil sulkily began kicking sand and earth into the flames.

"Pardon, m'sieu'," said Pierre, "dat is not de way. De wind blow away sand, blow up fire again. First we must have water."

Not until Cecil had trudged to the nearest stream, had carried back twenty buckets of water and poured them on the fire was Pierre satisfied.

Black night now enveloped them. Cecil could hardly see, for he had stared too much into the fire that he had been extinguishing. He trailed after Sir Charles and Pierre, wishing he had set fire to the whole Dominion. The brambles tore his face and hands while the flies that still clung to him found out the scratches.

He slipped into bog holes full of the seepage of brown water reeking with spruce bark; he was mired with the ooze of centuries; his only compass was the easy conversation of Sir Charles, who had forgotten his rheumatism in his interest in Pierre.

"I shall not regret this experience," Sir Charles went on. "It will be the making of Cecil—assuming that anything can make him. His father will be glad. What's the use of our exporting our sons to the colonies if the colonies don't want them? I say we should make our men fit for the colonies."

As if he were at his club Sir Charles was drawing political and economic texts from his adventure with the large generalizations of a man accustomed to turning blunders to profit.

I SAY. Sir Charles, the fellow has a radio."

This was the first human remark Cecil had uttered since he had entered the cabin.

Despite the comfort of chairs, the warmth of a blazing stove, a door that shut out flies and mosquitoes, almost a banquet of lake trout, beans, bacon and coffee, the crowning conclusion of a can of Navy Cut which Pierre happened to have, Cecil had maintained a fit of monosyllabic sulks.

He accepted the food, the comfort, even Pierre's attendance as if he were in a hotel, and to a cockney in this mood not even the Frontenac or the Château Laurier would be satisfying.

All through the meal Sir Charles had asked the thousand-and-one questions of the globe-trotter; Pierre answered cheerily while Cecil wrapped himself in bored indifference. Sir Charles, having acquired what zoölogical, geographical and social information he could obtain, began to take notice of Cecil's rudeness.

"You see, we couldn't tell where we were going. Though Cecil is a bachelor of science he has not yet been introduced to the polestar, which I believe always comes to the rescue of lost explorers."

Pierre laughed; and Cecil rose impatiently, pretending to be interested in the furnishings of the cabin.

It was then he discovered the black line of lead-in wire carried through the wood of the window sash in the usual porcelain tube. The radio set was swathed in the woolen particolored sash Pierre had used to wear before Mimi made him put off the flamboyant costumes of the old French.

"Yes, m'sieu'," responded Pierre to Cecil's ejaculation, "I buy heem in Mon'real. I hear Mon'real, Boston, New York. Soon de whole world."

Pierre carefully began to unswathe the set; for some reason he always put it to bed in this sash.

Cecil approached and watched the ceremony, losing his sulks in the comradeship of the internation rodeo of radio.

"You must have a slap-up set," he said. "I'm keen on radio frequency myself. More row, but more D. X."

A comfortable sigh came from Sir Charles.

"I'm glad you fellows have found something to be clubby over," he remarked.

Pierre was as slow in disentangling that scarf from his wires as a mother disrobing a new baby; he babbled like a new mother.

"Yes, m'sieu'. I hear de ice break in de North. I hear de geese in de sky. I hear de wolf pack howl and howl. Sometam I t'ink dey just outside."

"Wolves, eh? What will those chappies broadcast next?"

"Best of all, I hear my *blonde*. She sing in Mon'real. She sing Notre Dame Sundays, and week days at station."

"Not with that set, old top. You don't get Montreal, not to speak of Boston, on a crystal set. They're too far. Can't be done."

With supreme contempt Cecil was pointing his pipe at Pierre's childish and elementary hook-up of cat's whisker, crystal and tuning coil. The elaboration of tubes, batteries, condensers and transformers that he had been expecting was not there.

"Oh, yes, m'sieu'," persisted Pierre as he put on his phones. "I hear de wolf pack now. By gar, I t'ink dat fellow de Wolf Garou. Go away or I shoot you."

Playfully Pierre was reaching for his rifle that hung on the wall. He handed the phones to Cecil to convince him that the big werewolf was howling in them.

"Wolves? Rot!" said Cecil. "That's static. You might even get Montreal under favorable conditions. I've had freak reception. But you simply couldn't get Boston."

"Yes, m'sieu', de man I buy heem from say I get anywhere eef de air is good. I tell heem we have best air in de whole world in de woods. So I buy heem. I feex heem just as he say. I hear my Mimi most every night all de way from Mon'real."

CECIL uttered an exclamation and lifted his hand for silence. The incredulity faded from his face, extinguished by the new rapture Marconi and his multitudinous disciples have given to this age.

"By George, I'm getting code," he said solemnly. "We're at least a hundred and fifty miles from the Lakes or the St. Lawrence. A thousand from the sea. But I'm getting code. Code, Sir Charles. Shut up, everybody, while I try to read it."

Sir Charles contemplated Cecil with amusement; the flippant young Piccadilly pagan was awed, almost reverential. Lifting his right hand to his ear, he removed one of the phones and handed it to Pierre so the two could listen with one ear apiece.

"By gar, m'sieu', I don't know dat t'ing," said Pierre, who had not learned that the phones could be divided. "Now I hear de woodpeckers. Tacky-tack-tack-tack."

"That's not woodpeckers. It's a ship talking."

"Let him have his woodpeckers and his wolves, my boy," urged Sir Charles, for Cecil was again becoming dogmatic.

But Cecil was also sociably elucidating code to Pierre by tapping out dots and dashes with his knuckles on the shelf. Pierre grasped the idea at once.

"Lak de telegraph. Lak Larry at Du Chene. I get heem to teach me."

"I'll send you a quick way to learn it. Only you must learn International, not the Morse that the telegraph men use. I'm only beginning or I'd have made out that message. When you hear three little woodpeckers, then three big ones, and then the three little ones again, it means some ship is sinking and calling for help."

"What I do den, m'sieu'?" said Pierre, as quick to fly to the rescue of that ship as he was to shoot the Loup Garou.

"You—nothing. But you have the satisfaction of knowing some one is getting it who can help. Life-saving chappies,

you know. You learn code. It's much jollier than broadcasting, all our fellows say. Hello. Shut up, everybody."

Again Cecil was listening in and Pierre with him. Sir Charles, of course, hearing nothing, was impressed with the two rapt faces; to his prophesying sense they symbolized a splendid future—the backwoodsman and the dilettante clubman bonded together by those guesses of mathematicians and the verifications of mechanics that, to listeners at least, have abolished space.

"WMAF, Sir Charles. We got Dartmouth. Only a flash, but it was Dartmouth."

Cecil might have been cheering a good catch at cricket, but Pierre was not interested. He went on playing with his tuner. That far-off call of Dartmouth he regarded as an intrusion; he was not satisfied till a clear soprano singing "The Rosary" came out of the air. Ships and wolves and woodpeckers were all very well, but he wanted that voice.

"Dat's Mimi. First time I hear her I t'ink I crazy," he said, after the song was concluded and her program broken by some dull discourse he did not mind interrupting. "You see, I buy dis t'ing on chance. Larry say radio salesmen worse liars than Yankee book agents. Maybe, I say. Eef I no get Mimi I smash dis man's face next tam I go Mon'real. No care if I go jail and pay fine.

"I no tell people I have dis radio. Den when I hear her I t'ink maybe eet is not so. Maybe I crazy and t'ink too much of one girl. Cause I hear her all time without radio. In de woods, in rapides, de birds call lak her.

"But I write and tell her what she sing, and when she sing, and I know eet is no mistake. I hear Mimi really every night. One night she speak to me, just to me. She say, 'Hallo, Pierre, *comment ça va.* Ees de lak' froze yet?' Only she speak better English. Better dan de man that talk at station.

"She educate, she try educate me. She write me she get in trouble for speaking to me. She not allowed use radio lak telephone to friend's house. Eet is great pity, m'sieu'. But she sing to me every night right here in my cabane. By gar, m'sieu', some time I almost say, 'Mimi, let me mak' you some coffee.' "

PIERRE overflowed; the short circuit had loosened the lips of a lonely but sociable man. Cecil handed the loose phone back to Pierre, so that Pierre could give both ears to Mimi's next song.

"I really owe you an apology, old chap. I called you a liar just now. If I didn't, I meant to. Sorry."

Pierre took Cecil's hand; Cecil was really expressing his regrets for his abominable behavior of earlier in the evening. While Pierre listened in to the next song Cecil pried into the interior of that set with the inquisitiveness of a terrier at a rat hole.

"An ordinary crystal set," he announced, after the song was concluded and the concert-hall intentness that the distant singer had induced in the cabin was dissipated, "but it got Dartmouth, Sir Charles. The ordinary range for that hook-up is twenty-five miles. Listen in, Sir Charles."

SIR CHARLES waved aside the phone which Pierre offered.

"Thanks. I've been listening in to my own judgment, Cecil. I am going to take Pierre into our confidence. Pierre, if your young lady doesn't require your attention any more, will you tell me if you have ever come across any stones like these in this region?"

From a chamois bag out of an inner pocket Sir Charles poured on the table a heap of small stones. Some were dark gray; some were almost transparent crystals that looked like green and yellow glass. They fell heavily. Sir Charles, watching Pierre keenly, saw that they awoke little interest in him.

"That's calcite and silver ore. Cecil and I were doing a little private prospecting. I am Sir Charles Oliver, of London; this is Mr. Cecil Vanward, of Vanward & Vanward."

Sir Charles also saw that these names,

mighty in the city, meant as little to Pierre as the minerals.

"You find dese stones round here, m'sieu'?"

"No; I wish we had. They were brought to my office in London by a man who said he had found them round here. We have been trying to locate the lode this man wanted me to back. Perhaps you have met him? He gave his name as Louis la Roche. We have reason to believe, however, that that was not his real name."

"Why he no come with you, m'sieu'?"

"Unfortunately he met with his death in New York, it is assumed by violence. In fact, he was found shot in a hotel, and his effects rifled. The presumption at present is that it was not suicide. Some letters from me refusing him more money brought me into the case.

"Now, will you entertain a proposal to continue this man's prospecting? I assume he spoke the truth. He may have lied. But that is what I want to test. He said he found them in this neighborhood. Will you see if you can find any specimens like that?"

Pierre was not at all enthusiastic.

"I am no miner, m'sieu'. I no lak mines. Dey spoil rivers, kill fish, and frighten away duck and bear and rabbit. Dey cut down woods and mak' everything tree stumps lak streets in Cobalt. I been there. We no want mines on our land, m'sieu'."

"I told you so, Sir Charles."

Sir Charles raised a deprecating hand.

"Allow me, Cecil. Mr. Vanward advised me not to take a guide; he does not believe in trusting the natives. My policy, however, is always to assume the natives are like ourselves, and can be guided by intelligent self-interest."

"I no want to be mixed up with the police, m'sieu'."

"My dear fellow, this is not a police matter. I am Sir Charles Oliver of Vanward's Bank. If this man's story was fraudulent I bear the loss. If there's any lode I am entitled to my share. I advanced him money to find it.

"I appreciate your sentimental attachment to your acres. It's splendid, it's your tradition; it was the backbone of the defense of Verdun. But no one will drive you off your holding without giving you your price—assuming the lode is anywhere near your holding. Because, mind you, the whole thing is problematical. But I am willing to pay you a pound a week for one year to find out.

"You send me specimens of all the rocks you can find in this neighborhood, and I have learned that the Canadian concept of neighborhood is several hundred miles wide. Suppose we say twenty-five miles east, west, and north of here, to be precise. And to secure the contract, I will pay you ten pounds in advance."

The crisp, clean Bank of England note removed Pierre's scruples. Sir Charles immediately proceeded to draw up an agreement on a blank leaf from his notebook.

"You will search for crystals like these —calcite, the gangue of silver. If you find native silver, which is quite possible, you cannot mistake it. Rub any gray stone you find to see if it shines.

"Of course you will mail the packet without advertising its contents. If discovered, you can say you are collecting geological specimens for McGill University, with which I have some connection."

"I suggest zoölogical, Sir Charles."

"Quite so, Cecil—bones, fossils, and so forth."

Sir Charles laid down his proposals as grandly as he would have conducted a major operation in finance. Pierre, despite his doubts, was flattered, though he was utterly incredulous of the stories of fortunes he had heard from the North. But he signed the paper and received the bank note.

"And now bed," said Sir Charles, making for the bunk that Pierre had yielded to him.

"How long is your aërial, Pierre?" broke in Cecil.

"If you fellows are going to talk radio," said Sir Charles, curling under the blankets, "will you please—what is the con-

founded technicality? Will you please—tune me out? I'm tired."

The two young men talked in whispers. Cecil promised Pierre a code and all the radio magazines. A wealth greater than all the silver mines of Canada was opening up to Pierre.

"I'd send you a regenerative set, but the batteries might bother you. You might get more D. X., but nothing clearer than that crystal."

"I no care so long as I hear Mimi," said Pierre.

CHAPTER III.

THE POLICE ALARM.

IT was hard to get Cecil to start next morning; Sir Charles could not tear him away from Pierre's set.

"I'd cut these branches away from your antenna," he said, pointing to the still-unoxidized line of copper wire Pierre had run from the cabin to a maple. "How about your ground?"

Pierre assured him he had followed the salesman's directions, and had soldered his ground wire to a piece of metal pipe driven into the earth just outside the window.

"I hope you get this reception all winter. Don't know how your awful frosts affect a ground, but I'd bury it deeper, if I were you. Remember, the current that comes out of the ground is as important as that which comes out of the air."

Sir Charles finally had to drag him away.

Pierre carried them across the lake in his canoe to which he had now rigged the sail. Cecil, after a night's rest and a hunt-club breakfast, felt as capable of instructing Pierre in the management of sailing canoes as of radio sets.

"You should have an outrigger. Then she'd bear into the wind. You will have to paddle back."

"Cecil, will you please consider yourself cargo, and not the captain? I don't want to be capsized twice," said Sir Charles testily. "Pierre is quite able to manage. Where did you learn to sail, Pierre?"

"I been to sea, m'sieu'. I get wrecked near Detroit. Last night when I hear ship I t'ink of dat tam. No want to go to sea no more."

Cecil was asking his quick-fire questions about that fresh-water wreck, but Sir Charles interrupted to give Pierre some further instructions.

Stimulated by that serenity that hangs over the lakes in the fall, when the long reaches shine like silver and over the waters are scattered the gold bronze of the forests, Sir Charles became almost poetical over the mineral future of Canada. His voice boomed over the shining levels sending the ducks scurrying to shelter, startling the trout from their shallows, desecrating that sanctuary of stillness with the trumpetings of money.

Soon Pierre landed his party and bade them farewell. Sir Charles again uttered some warning about secrecy to Pierre and Cecil's last word was that Pierre should keep a log of his reception.

THEY had barely disappeared at the turn of the trail when a man emerged from the bushes. It was Jake, carrying a gun and a game bag. His beard had grown; his hair was longer, and curling up under his cap.

"Hello, Pierre," he said. "Where did you pick up the Johnny Bulls?"

"Dey get lost. You come to my cabane?"

"Sure. I was heading your way. What are those fellows doing round here?"

Pierre could not answer at once with his usual frankness. He was no longer a free man; the servitude of the cities had bound him to caution; he was in the employment of Sir Charles. He flushed with the annoyance of having to lie.

"I don't know. Sam' t'ing as all dese Anglais. Mak' beeg fire and burn woods. Mak' paddle lak steamboats and go over rapides."

Jake took a sneaking look at Pierre, but said nothing as he got into the canoe and dipped the forward paddle. The wind was against them for sailing up the lake. The big fellow was too big for the bows, but Pierre did not want him behind him,

for somehow he still distrusted Jake. Jake was the kind of man he always wanted to face. And now that Jake had grown a beard Pierre was more distrustful than ever because he could not read his lips.

He judged Jake to be some town man up here for a little shooting; not rich, from his outfit; not Anglais, Yank or Canayen, from his speech; a poor hunter apparently, because his bag was empty; a paddler of force but not much skill. Pierre found it easier to decide what Jake was not than what he was. Now Pierre had his radio he did not need company; besides, the fellow might be an embarrassment when it came to doing his work for Sir Charles.

"Dis ees my place, m'sieu'. Old-tam trading post. Built one hundred and fifty year ago. Mak' yourself at home. You feesh, you hunt, you just do nothing. Plenty everything."

Pierre started to prepare a meal.

"Where did you get them funny stones, matey?"

Jake was fingering the crystals of calcite and a few bits of silver ore Sir Charles had left on the table as samples for Pierre. Pierre should have put them away.

"Oh, round here somewhere. Pretty, I t'ink."

One of Jake's fists closed on the stones and the other grasped Pierre by the shoulder.

With his quick instinct Pierre realized that he had blundered, but just as quickly that Jake's grasp did not mean violence. There was no attack in the big bear's paw. Pierre could feel it trembling; and Jake's brown face went as white as that strange streak of gray in the hairs under his chin.

"Tell me where, son!" he gasped, almost choking. "Show me; take me to it. It's ours, yours and mine! That's silver oxide, or I'm batty. Where did you get it?"

Jake was shouting, almost weeping; his fingers were gripping Pierre as if Pierre were a nugget of fabulous value; his emotion actually melted his immense strength into feebleness; his knees sagged and he had to sink into a chair. Pierre immediately decided on his course.

"I lie, m'sieu', because eet is not my affair. Dat stone de Anglais, de old man tak' from his pocket. I did not find eet. I do not know where he get eet."

Jake's eyes bored into Pierre's, and an oath, a strange one to Pierre, broke from his lips; his strength and ferocity returned as a terrific tide; he rose to his feet, one big bulking threat.

"You're lying again, then. You're on silver. My first hunch was right. I follered you from the town after I seen you in the train.

"I thought you were packing mining fuse. You bluffed me with that radio yarn. I follered you, sure you had a little show all your own back in the woods. You lied to me then, as you're lying now!"

"By gar, m'sieu', some tam you and me has to fight beeg. I did lie about dat stone, but I did not lie about my radio. See."

Pierre lifted a corner of the scarf and showed enough of the set to convince Jake. Jake saw that the lead-in wire with its black insulation was not mining fuse.

"But how about that ore and Sir Charles? Oh, I know him. Everybody knows him in Cobalt. Has his finger in every pie. What's he doing here? Is that stone from here or Cobalt?"

"I don't know," answered Pierre hotly. "Sir Charles he tell me he buy it from some man in London. Dat all I can say."

THE stone dropped from Jake's hands, for he opened his fingers as if the bits had become hot. For a moment he looked like a trapped animal; then he rushed to the door and went out, stumbilng.

Pierre's anger at Jake's calling him a liar, at himself for betraying his connection with Sir Charles even to this small extent, evaporated in curiosity. Why was this evidently violent ruffian restraining himself?

Pierre had fended off wolves from a camp fire with burning brands; he had been chased by moose and with his last bullet brought down the impaling horns when a yard from his breast; he had met knifing half-breeds running amuck on whisky—therefore he knew that brutal

blood lust had for a moment burned in the eyes of Jake.

Then why was this bear of a man holding himself so taut? Why was he always provoking trouble and then running away from it, as he had in the train, as he had in Montreal? Thrice Pierre had set himself for a rough and tumble with this burly brute, and it had not happened. Was he merely blustering on his bigness and at heart merely a coward?

Disdaining all precaution, Pierre followed him outside. Jake was returning to the cabin.

"See here, son," he said, standing at some distance from Pierre and speaking with that drawl that Pierre could not place, "you and me somehow get on one another's nerves. Men do sometimes. Got to fight it out usually, but I'm through with fights. You had me locoed just now for a minute.

"I'm a miner; I've prospected in every part of the world. Gold, silver, diamonds —anything that means coin. Think how I felt when I had me mitts on the richest bit of stone since Broken Hill. Richer than any that came from under Lake Cobalt. Think how I felt when you said you found it round here.

"D'ye wonder I bucked out of me boots? D'ye blame me wanting to drag you off and stake out the claim? I've seen prospects like that empty a city of its men overnight. You don't understand. Too slow here, too much tied up with government regulations. I come from a country where the government can't put up reservations, where you own what you find. You'll excuse an old rush chaser, Pierre, my son."

There was enough sincerity in the man for Pierre to take the offered hand, big as the paw of a plantigrade. They went back into the cabin.

"Now I've got a proposition to put up to you," continued Jake. "I like the looks of this country. I'd like to scratch it a bit. Fact is, I've been doing a little, to the south. But it looks better up here. Them hills to the north look likely."

He emptied his game bag on the table; it poured out a handful of stones, a hammer and a prospector's dish.

"Nothing to hurrah about so far. But the stuff is here. It's under the lakes in Cobalt. It's under the ice in Labrador. It's in Greenland.

"I've mined in hot countries and in cold, and I believe the nearer you get to the north pole the richer the dirt. Look at Alaska; and across Bering Straits there's more, only the Russian government won't let you mine it. If they catch you it means the salt mines for life, and that's one kind of mining I don't handle. See here."

He parted the whiskers under his chin to show a scar running from his chin to his throat.

"That's what gold mining means in Russia. That's a bit of shrapnel. Me and party crossed the Strait in kayaks and was on gold when one of their gunboats began shelling us. We got away, losing a Seattle chap. But that was when I was younger. Don't do those things now."

Pierre listened with keen interest.

"The stuff is here," Jake kept repeating.

"How do you know?"

"Because Sir Charles Oliver is here. Sir Charles mines with his check book. When his kind come in a field men like me has to move on. They've licked me from the tropics to the arctic circle.

"But this time I'm going to put in my stakes for keeps. I'm going to make my big strike in these woods, and Jake Grant's going to be somebody."

He grinned like a wolf; he clenched his claws like a gorilla; but he spoke like a determined and a resourceful man. Pierre saw that the grizzly he had taken into his cabin had a brain.

"And now, son, how about you and me forming a party? We make this humpy our headquarters and go over the country with a fine comb. Oh, I ain't sponging on you. I'll pay half the grub and throw in my experience."

Pierre did not want this. Any lodes he found belonged to Sir Charles, and he

did not want to reveal his connection with Sir Charles.

"I no miner, m'sieu'."

Jake sat down and leisurely lit his pipe. Pierre knew that the matter was not closed, for he knew that Jake was thinking hard. Jake kept turning over the stones he had dropped with the point of his forefinger.

"You're wrong there, son. You've got the first requisite of a miner. You can put on a good poker face and you're a fine liar."

"M'sieu'!"

"Now don't go off half cock. I'm pinning a medal on you. If you are no miner why did Sir Charles leave those specimens with you?

"You're a natural-born prospector. You know how to hide your find. But just to show you this old swaggie knows a trick or two, I tell you I see your stakes. I'll bet all the piles I ever made that Sir Charles has signed you up for a little grubstaking. What about it? Am I right?"

Jake stared into Pierre's eyes with perspicuous and searching cunning. Pierre was angry, but his anger was impotent. He could not deny Jake's charge, and he did not know how to deal with this wise old fox.

"Don't get mad, son," continued Jake, enjoying his triumph. "That was easy to an old-timer like me. Men like Sir Charles don't holler out advice except to their mates. But now that we know all about each other, let's drop it. How about going after some trout?"

With that same self-mastery that Pierre had wondered at, Jake dropped his cunning, his suggestion of brutal determination, and relapsed into a simple man of the woods.

ALTERNATELY fascinated and repelled by Jake, Pierre showed him his farm. They shot, they fished, they walked, they paddled. Pierre found him a silent man when watching the birds break cover or the trout rise, but a fascinating talker in camp.

He had been in many lands and knew many peoples. Not once did Jake mention mining, though Pierre noticed that he kicked over a stone that tripped him on a trail and scrutinized bits of stone that stuck to his hands after vaulting one of Pierre's fences. Pierre could not make up his mind about the fellow.

After supper Pierre sat down to his radio, which was the one feature of the farm that did not interest Jake.

"I've been thinking, son," said Jake suddenly. "What's the matter with us sharing grub and working separate? You for Sir Charles and me on me own. The country is big enough for all of us."

That was what Pierre had been afraid of—that Jake would hang on. Pierre was sure of one thing about Jake after a day in his company, and that was that once the big fellow took hold nothing but death would loosen his grip. There was a solid, impenetrable hardness about him that with his simian cunning, his under-dog knowledge of men and things, drove Pierre to class him as a Loup Garou with the intelligence of the slyest Reynard of fable.

Pierre did not respond at once to Jake's suggestion. Hitherto he had regarded Sir Charles' proposition rather lightly. He was to pick up a few stones in the interim of hunting and farming. He could not keep at that long because winter was due; very soon the rocks and the fields would be buried deep under snows packed tight with the frost. But the value given to this stone picking by Jake made him wonder if Sir Charles' dream of wealth might not be a real possibility.

"Afraid I'll grab the lode and knock you on the head, son?"

Jake was grinning; his little, piercing gray eyes were like a pair of searching gun barrels.

"Why you ask, Jake? You seem to know everything I t'ink."

Jake rolled back in his chair, chuckling till his huge frame shook.

"Son, you can't prospect gold or silver unless you can prospect men. I've learned that when it comes to coin all men think along the same tracks.

"I've chased coin from farthest south in

New Zealand to farthest north at Point Barrow. And coin always talks the same lingo in every latitude. Yank, Britisher, chink, Jap, or Papuan, it's just grab and get it. Sometimes it's rifles and knives, sometimes it's regulations and law courts. But it pans out just the same."

"You Yankee, Jake?"

Jake turned his pipe in his mouth before answering, and he covered his direct glance with a veiling scowl.

"Some fields I've been on, a personal question like that'd start trouble, but considering you ain't never seen nothing but your woods and ain't never really roughed it, I'll allow the question. I'm Yank when it suits. I'm God-save-the-king when it pays. I've got papers to fit both sides of the border. My country is coin."

Pierre laughed; there was a grim humor about Jake that appealed to him, a defiant recklessness in his boasting of evil. Pierre liked the sense of danger evoked by Jake. He liked to play with that danger; he wanted to ask more questions, to probe into Jake's dubious but fascinating past.

Jake seized on Pierre's laugh as he would a speck of gold on his shovel, for it was a prospect of friendliness.

"Say, son, you and me would get along. You dug into me private affairs and that ruins more mateship than women or liquor. But I allow that just to eddicate yer.

"I'm an Aussie, born in New South Wales. White to me mate, no matter what his color or breed. Color and breed don't mean much when you've trekked and trailed and eaten damper and chewed pemmican and drunk everything from shypoo beer to aguardiente.

"What's a man's country anyway? The man that can produce coin has papers for everywhere. That's me, Jake Grant, naturalized citizen of the international union of fossickers——"

Pierre had been listening in with one ear on Montreal, only the other given to Jake. Jake was his major interest at first, for he paid small attention to the announcer at CKAC whose words came over the phone orchestrated with whistle of locomotives in adjoining freight yards and the car bells from the streets.

He smiled at Jake's cynical picture of himself; he took in Jake's battered, weather-worn features, from the wrinkled, gimletlike eyes to the white tuft of hair growing out of his brushwood whiskers.

THE voice in the phone changed its announcements; after declaring the evening program it began broadcasting the police alarms. The voice was announcing that a reward of two hundred dollars would be paid for information that would lead to the arrest of one Jacob Griggs, alias "Digger" Griggs, alias "Wallaby Jake" who was wanted by the New York police for murder. Then followed a minute description of the wanted man.

With a hunter's intuition, with a boy's delight in playing with a firecracker, Pierre handed Jake one of the phones.

"Somet'ing very interesting for you, m'sieu'."

Jake was slow in adjusting the phone. The man in Montreal was describing the wanted criminal as about fifty, of Herculean build, weighing about two hundred pounds. Speaking with a rather cockney accent. With a long knife cut under his chin. The man repeated his description, to put the alarm more thoroughly on the air.

Jake's face went as white as that streak of hair that grew from his shrapnel wound; he arose, uttering a strangled howl and backed against the wall, reaching for his rifle.

Pierre hauled in the phone which Jake had dropped and strained his ear into the ether. He did not need the further announcement that the criminal was wanted for the murder of Louis la Roche in New York City. He had uncovered this man who had so disturbed him; he had resolved his doubts; he laughed with pure joy at finding his sinister suspicions were proved.

"You don't get me," barked Jake, "not if I leave stiffs all the way to Hudson Bay."

Pierre was gazing into the black mouth

of Jake's rifle. Jake was cornered, amazed, astounded by this new instrument of the law. That tiny voice in his ear had terrified him more than baying bloodhounds or galloping lynchers.

His name and his crime were being shouted over the world that he was claiming for his country; radio too was international and he was being tracked by the radio police. The rifle shook in his hands, the barrel described odd perturbations very unlike the steady way he had been shooting that morning in the woods.

Pierre knew very well that a terrified man driven to his last stand is more dangerous than a cornered grizzly. He was out of reach of his own gun; Jake's wild eyes glared along the barrel of his and his fingers twitched on his trigger.

With a suggestion from that soul-stretching apparatus with which Pierre had been quickening his imagination he held the loose phone toward Jake. The black object with the hole in its center looked like a weapon. It was the most potent Pierre could have used, for Jake stared at it with a wonder that was almost superstition.

"Dey hear all you say in Mon'real, Jake."

With a despairing curse Jake directed his barrel at the radio set.

"Eet quicker than your shot, Jake. Eet hear me call. Eet hear me speak now. Eet bring de police in no tam."

Pierre knew perfectly well that his set could not send. Neither the shot nor Jake's admission that he was the criminal, that he would use his last bullet on the pursuing police, could be carried back to that announcer.

But Jake did not know that; Jake knew nothing and cared nothing for radio. He was cowed, beaten, trapped. He did not know whether to shoot Pierre or the set; or to hold his shot for the police that he half expected at any moment would break in the door.

"How you come kill Louis la Roche, Jake?"

"It was him or me. It was fair fight. How do they know it was me killed him? I ain't the only man with a knife cut under me chin. You can't prove I'm the man.

"Who the hell is Louis la Roche? Ain't seen him since I was in the Yukon. Don't know him. Never seen him. What business is it of the Canuck police? Doing New York's dirty work. You can't touch me; I'm a British subject."

MIXING admissions with denials, unnerved by the denouncing telephone, Jake shouted at it as if it were an interrogating officer putting him through a third degree. He would have shown much more nerve if confronted by actual police.

"I t'ink you safe for a while, Jake;" said Pierre, confident now that he had the whip hand of Jake. "I no tell police. I lak police no more than you. I no help dem.

"You say you keel dis man fair fight. All right. Dat your private affair. Eef you want go north all way to Hudson Bay I give you bacon and flour and say notting."

Jake began to take hold of himself. He dropped his rifle and resumed his usual clenched grin. His teeth showed through his whiskers as he spoke.

"That contraption got under my hide. I never expected to find a headquarters telephone in the backwoods. You say that cop can hear what I say?"

Pierre pretended to make some adjustment with his tuner.

"Not now, Jake; I feex it. You see, every night dey broadcast for stolen automobiles, lost babies, everyt'ing."

A sudden light came into Jake's still-bewildered features.

"Say, son, why are you hiding back in the woods all on your lonesome? I believe you've got a record too. Oh, I don't mean that picayune fuss in Carandolet Street. You're hiding from something.

"I don't want to know what it is. You tumbled on a bit of mine but I don't care a hoot what yours is. Let's bury 'em both. No more digging into private affairs. But you gave me the worst scare since I was chased by Papuan cannibals.

"I've got a few hours' start of them anyway. I'll take that flour and bacon. But I pay for it. I ain't no bushranger."

He opened the door and gazed into the black night. The first snowflakes of the winter were blowing in his face; the first cold was invading the cabin.

"You better stay till morning, m'sieu'. I no lak you go dis night."

"Don't you worry about me. I'm a bushman. I'll beat it north and west."

He ceased suddenly and glared at the radio set.

"And I suppose every R. M. station has got one of them things. Every trooper's licking his chops over that reward. They got my Yukon name too—Wallaby Jake."

He looked again out into the night where a pale glow of northern lights glimmered on the lake.

"Will you sell me your canoe?" he asked. "I'd make better time with that."

"No, m'sieu'. You no manage canoe. You no Canayen. You drown. I t'ink you better stay here.

"De police not know you here. Dis machine no speak back. I lie just now cause you near shoot me. I no let you go dis night when snow fall."

Jake was so relieved at Pierre's admission that he could not be angry.

"Son, you're white and you're clever. Didn't I say you was a good liar? You and me are born pardners."

CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE OUTSIDE.

"ARE you starting a mail-order business back in the woods, Pierre?" said the postmaster on handing Pierre an unusually large mail.

Pierre had come into Du Chene the evening before. Violent storms had held him snow bound for over two weeks. Besides Mimi's letters, a large bundle of papers, magazines, and other letters was waiting for him. He would have left the magazines but that he was certain they were from Cecil, for besides the mail he had some stores to carry and his bag was heavy.

Hoping to reach the cabin before dark he started early over the snow-covered trail, where he frequently went up to his hips in snow and the white-laden boughs dropped masses on him, as if trying to bury him. He was glad to reach the lake, whose more level surface, even if piled with wavelike drifts, made easier traveling.

The early night overtook him before he reached the top of the lake, and above the faint glimmer of the snow surrounded by the dim, wooded shores he saw the intermittent blaze of a fire. He knew this had been lit by Jake on the edge of the ice to guide him home over the dark, trackless, and uncertain waste. Jake was always doing things like that.

For Jake was staying through the winter with him and so far they had got along very well. Jake did more than his share of the chores, though he would never go into town for the mail for fear he would be recognized.

They understood when to respect each other's silence and when to be sociable; they had gone beyond the necessity of being laboriously polite; they occasionally swore at and frequently ridiculed each other; it was a perfect democracy of two, made possible through Jake's experience and rough humor and Pierre's surface gayety.

Mining never was mentioned. Pierre had been able to send Sir Charles a few specimens before the ground was completely buried. Jake had kept discreetly out of the way when Pierre chipped the ledges to the north and packed them for shipment.

Jake's hair and beard had grown long enough to qualify for some weird Russian sect he had told Pierre he had met in the Northwest. That betraying streak of white hair was completely overgrown with grizzled brown.

He looked a different man, almost patriarchal. He never spoke of his troubles with the law; but he would never listen into Pierre's radio, and took his recreation in solitaire.

"He good fellow," murmured Pierre as

he approached that flare of pine logs, which he did not stop to extinguish. Nothing would burn in that frost-bound forest till next fall.

He opened the cabin door. A wonderful fragrance met him; the cabin was full of steam and above the stove he could see Jake stabbing the bobbing potatoes that were boiling around a juicy ham.

"What kept you? This meat's boiled to glue."

After a twenty-five-mile stage in zero weather, against the wind with a big load, Pierre had every reason to look dazed. But it was not fatigue or cold that kept him silent; he was thinking how much better it would be if Mimi were the cook.

If Jake had not been left in charge his stove would have been out and he would have been hours warming the cabin and cooking that meal. He would have had to melt ice for water. Old Hector was right —only fools and fanatics can live alone.

He turned to his mail, but Jake persuaded him to eat first.

"Stoke up first, son; grub before girls," said Jake, who had an uncanny way of guessing Pierre's thoughts. Jake poured out the stew and Pierre acceded to his wisdom.

AFTER the meal Pierre put on his phones and sat by the stove to read Mimi's letters. It was time for her to be going on the air.

Midwinter had not frozen her voice out of his antenna. At first he had been careful to shake the snow off the wire but now it was covered with pointed little icicles and frozen globules; they had not interfered with his reception; they even seemed to improve it.

"Mon Dieu!" murmured Pierre.

Jake paid no attention. As a perfect mate, Jake allowed Pierre to talk to himself without comment. Pierre often practiced his study of code that way, muttering the *der-dah der-dah* of the letters to himself, tapping with his fingers on the table that he might learn to read the messages of the ships.

But Pierre's exclamation was a cry from the heart, not code. Mimi's letter was a stab of a fiercer cold than he had felt in any winter.

Mimi had decided to go to Paris to study, so her first letter of two weeks ago announced. Her last letter told him she had departed to Boston and was sailing for Paris that very day.

The stove rattled with the gusts, and the wind without broke off ice-laden branches. Through the phones came the voice of a new soprano from CKAC.

Pierre took off the phones and opened the door to look out at the weather. On such a blustery night his lumber schooner had piled up on the sand bars of Lake Michigan. The blaze of Jake's fire still shone on the black patches of smooth ice that reminded Pierre of the wet decks of that awful night.

"Shut the door, you crazy loon. I ain't got gal's letters to keep me warm," shouted Jake.

Pierre shut the door, but could not shut out his vision of Mimi taken from him by tossing seas.

"She go to Paris, Jake. She sail tonight for Paris."

Jake's reply to Pierre's disconsolate tones was a grunt. So far he had been too considerate to predict this ending of Pierre's romance. He had listened to Pierre telling him how the girl had been yielding to the seductions of success, the letters and telegrams to the broadcasting station complimenting her, the offers to sing at other stations. She had been singing to the world and the world was taking her.

"At sea, on a night like dis!" Pierre kept saying. "I t'ink I never see her again."

Jake gathered up his cards and prepared to take a deal in a bigger game. Mimi had never been included in the embargo placed on private affairs by the two men. Jake knew the whole story. He had acquired a shrewd knowledge of that ambitious and clever young woman. Now was his opportunity to swing a man his way, to turn a trick.

"She's quite right, Pierre. Do you think a young and pretty woman is going to set-

tle down on a frozen farm and watch you get fat and mother a dozen kids? Them days is past. I'm kinder glad she ditched you. Maybe you'll wake up and smoke real he tobacco."

Pierre was only half listening; his face was drawn with misery.

"She say she wait for me. She say there never be no other man."

"Ah, blah, blah! You ain't wise to women. I know 'em, black, white and yaller. Women are all right when you know 'em, but they're all wrong when you don't.

"That was only her slick way of letting you down easy. You were good to her and women like to hold on to their steadies. Maybe she'll need you some day. But it's the best thing ever happened to you.

"I'd have been keeping a shop in Sydney to-day if a girl hadn't ditched me. That gal made me the man I am. Best thing that happened to you is that gal getting some sugar daddy——"

Jake carefully timed his speech and measured his manner. He took pains not to become heated. He picked up Pierre's bundle of new magazines and began cutting the string. He enunciated his views as if they were impersonal axioms. Pierre found it difficult to answer this man whom he had been leaning upon for his larger knowledge.

"What you mean, Jake?" was all he could say.

"Why, where's she getting the coin from? Coin's needed for ocean trips and singing lessons Can't be done on choir singers' salaries. Who is staking her? You don't think you're the only man to fall for a yodeler, do you?"

"M'sieu', she would tell me."

"Likewise bull. You've got to realize you're just tailings. She's worked you for all you're worth, and now she's after richer stuff. Wake up from this grand-opera moonshine and be a man.

"I told you I'd educate you. This is your next grade. You don't get women by lying back loafing and writing 'em twenty-page letters. Gals don't fall for poetry these days. You couldn't get a gal like that unless you used a club.

"Clubs, son, clubs. That's what gets 'em, and the best club is a big bag of iron men. Gals like that won't fall for stick-at-home tobacco raisers, sitting round a stove half the year and picnicking the rest. They want hair-raising, rip-roaring men."

Jake appeared utterly unconscious of the effect his bitter philosophy was producing on the young man. He did not know how well he was voicing Pierre's own judgment of himself.

"M'sieu', I trouble you not speak about my private affairs."

"All right, son. Sorry, son. But you introduced them."

PERFECTLY satisfied he had inoculated Pierre with his viewpoints on women and life, viewpoints that might lead that romantic young man to other standards concerning silver lodes, grub-stakers' finds, priority claims, and all the chicanery of his calling, Jake dropped the subject. But he watched Pierre warily from under his bushy eyebrows.

Pierre had dropped into a chair. His opening of the door had chilled the cabin. He threw logs in the stove till it became red-hot and the flames roared in the flue, though he himself was not physically cold. He was burning inside with the bitter fire of self-appraisement, for he knew Jake was partly right; Jake had only coarsely and crudely echoed the wisdom of old Hector Trudelle.

He had been too satisfied to dream; that fine French face of his stared into the ash pit of the stove seeking guidance to some avenue of action. Mimi's leaving him would be the best thing that could happen if it could only arouse the spirit of Maisonneuve's coureurs des bois that he had allowed to sleep. He was burning out the dross of those dreams, mining deeper than ever Jake had dug to find that he was really a hair-raising rip roarer at heart, though a wielder of a rapier where Jake would use a club.

He determined to write to Mimi and

tell her that next spring he would leave his truck garden as Jake had left his shop, go north, go west, battle his way to Hudson Bay if necessary, and compel the woods to yield him their treasure. He had been against the lumbermen, the mining men, the hordes of violent, heavy-handed fellows from the cities who dug up the earth, cut down the woods, left only stumps, chips and tailings; but now he saw the woods must go.

The old times were past. The days of the easy-jogging habitant were over. With men like Sir Charles on one wing and the Jakes on the other the new Canada was staking out her place among the nations.

"Excuse me for butting in, Pierre," Jake was saying. "Don't know whether I ought to mention it, but your name and this shack is featured all over these magazines."

Jake was handing him a magazine displaying the startling cover of a man driving ten horses with lightning flashes for reins. But Jake still held the knife with which he had cut the string.

Jake's experience had taught him to mistrust a man who grew still and courteous after his lady-love had been reflected upon. To Jake Pierre was still something of a strange and foreign varmint.

"Top of the page, Pierre."

Pierre was amazed to read an article describing the wonderful radio reception reported from a crystal set operated by the well-known Canadian amateur—Mr. Pierre Ladouceur.

IT was a wonderful anodyne for Pierre to read his name in print, though the story was a brief one; a mere technical statement of the phenomenal reception.

Pierre had long grown used to the wonders of radio. The extraordinary quality of his set that Cecil had grown so enthusiastic over he had taken for granted; perhaps the Englishman had been merely atoning for his rudeness by overgeniality; by this time the set had become as much a commonplace to Pierre as Larry's telegraph.

"And here's yer picture, son."

Jake handed him another magazine with a half tone of himself and his cabin. Cecil had sent him a print of this, which was there on the wall of the cabin. In the magazine print his antenna was marked with a cross and the letter press at the bottom drew attention to its length.

Pierre was operating on nearly two hundred feet of wire, which would increase his signal strength. The story was written in more detail than in the other magazine; and Pierre read that the photographs were supplied and the facts of the reception vouched for by the well-known British amateur—Mr. Cecil Vanward.

So Pierre learned that Cecil had been sincere in his wonderment over the set; by luck or accident Pierre had achieved something millions of people would be glad to read about; the name of the no-account, tobacco-raising idler was broadcasted to the world.

By a happy fortune one of the magazines had a picture of the nightingale of Trois Rivières, Miss Mimi Breton, who was now broadcasting nightly from CKAC. In some mysterious way Pierre had climbed into Mimi's class.

"By gar, by gar!" he murmured, with a returning glow of self-appreciation.

"Why don't you open the rest of your mail? Seems to me the President of the United States wants to know how you did it, too. I hear he's a radio bug."

Jake passed over a letter in an official envelope bearing the imprint of the Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C. Most of the other letters, he noticed now, had imprints also. At first he had only seen Mimi's pink stationery and one that he knew was from Sir Charles, probably with his monthly remittance. Some of the letters were addressed to Pierre Ladouceur, Esquire.

The Washington letter begged to know, in virtue of the interest his reception had aroused, what kind of crystal he had been using; what were the windings of his coil and his other set constants; what were the electric conditions that favored that reception; if an unusual display of aurora borealis produced any static; would he

favor with a copy of his log; the stations received, times when, temperatures inside and outside receiving station; whether he had used any other kind of receiver and if so would he compare results; and any further details would greatly oblige the Bureau of Standards.

"I tell heem eet is Canada. Canada lick the world in radio. Best people, best place for radio."

Pierre stood up ecstatically and put on his phones.

"You read de rest, Jake, eet is too much for me."

Jake went through the voluminous mail. There were letters from research laboratories as exacting in their demands as the one from Washington, besides all sorts of queer little epistles from small juice-jerking hams with small-power sending stations. Jake read them with the dull bewilderment of a man unable to grasp new ideas.

"You're on the front page, all right, but I don't see what you're getting out of it," he said.

"Hush, Jake. I get a ship. I t'ink I read somet'ing."

Through a broadcast in French had burst a crackle of code strong enough to drown the speaker. So far Pierre had not made much progress at reading code. It usually came too faint and quick for him. He tried hard to identify the dots and dashes and not mistake the spaces between letters for the breaks in a letter.

"Here's a kid writing," continued Jake. "He's using a crystal set outside Boston. Can't get nuthin', he says, and wants you to tell him what's wrong, and—hello?"

Jake's languid interest became intense as he picked up a letter with a manufacturer's heading and a cut of a large plant.

"Son, this chap talks turkey. Listen to this. Coin's talking now!" he exclaimed, as he read the letter. " 'We are satisfied as to the big future of the crystal set. Whatever device you have succeeded in inventing, we wish to be the first to make you an offer—either outright purchase or on a royalty basis. It will be to your advantage to do nothing until you hear from our representative who will be empowered to sign contracts and offer you whatever reasonable advance bonus you may require.' "

JAKE shouted as if he had kicked up a nugget.

"Bonus. Do you get that? That's lingo I understand. That's dollars-and-cents English. Son, you're on to something big. Hang on. Hold tight. Cling with your hands, your teeth, your eyebrows. It's a strike."

Jake bellowed, and waved the letter like a flag.

"Don't let any jasper get a peep at your layout till he signs and hands over that bonus. Patent crooks are worse than mining crooks. They'll say it's no good. 'Tain't new. All the time making a map of it and finding how yer show runs. No, sir, don't you trust 'em. It's lucky you've got me to look after yer."

Jake had found a meaning for all that correspondence; he read it in terms of coin.

"Scientific guys, geologists, bugologists, the whole shooting match, all high-grade sharks like Sir Charles Oliver. I know 'em. Come to your camp wanting to write books about you, they do. Want to take your pictures 'cause you're picture-skew. All the while noting the run of your pegs and the best way to jump you.

"You find out their rating before you commit yerself. Demand a bank reference and see it ain't faked. Sandbag any gink who comes in here without a passport of—how many millions are you going to ask?"

Pierre was amazed at the torrent of suspicion and enthusiasm that poured from Jake. At one moment the big fellow was talking like Sir Charles; he swelled with financial power; then he snarled like a dog that another dog is attacking for his bone. Pierre was only amused at the manufacturer's offer.

"Jake, I invent notting. I just buy de set in Saint Catherine Street. I bring heem home and put heem up just as man say."

"Son, you've done something," said Jake solemnly. "I've seen you gearing up that set lots of times. You've hit on something. You've kicked up a bonanza by a fluke and that's the way they come big. I've seen it in every part of the world.

"Boy, you've been given the glad eye by old Lady Luck. I had me hunch when I ran into you in Montreal. Had it again when I met you in the train. You're one of them fellers coin chases."

Jake was delirious, not only over the offer for the secret of the set, but for what those letters presaged. He was superstitious because he was suspicious and by this time he had thoroughly identified himself with Pierre's fortunes.

"Eef we had any cognac, Jake, I t'ink you drunk."

"Son, I am. All the liquor in Glasgow ain't nothin' to knowing you're on a strike. It's here, boy—it's here."

He grasped the letter as if it were a freehold to Golconda; he was almost singing when he stopped suddenly at a faint, low cry from without; a sound thinned by distance, dampened by the wind, but not the howl of wolves or the scream of a trapped fox—a cry that was human.

Pierre rushed to the door, but Jake got there first and stopped him.

"Wait till I load me gun," he pleaded. "Cover up your machine. I've had the perishing-prospector gag pulled on me before. A chap blew in on me once, got me to nurse him for a week so he could locate my find——"

Pierre was not to be stopped by Jake's insanity of suspicion, but pushed him aside and threw open the door. Across the ice a man was stumbling toward them. He gathered new strength at the sight of the open door; with a whimpering cry he fell in on top of Pierre. Only the tip of his nose was visible under his cap; and he reached out his hands toward the stove.

Pierre held him back from that danger of sudden thawing, and shouted to Jake to put on coffee. He then carefully removed the cap from the man's face, lest his skin should be frozen to it.

"Why, eet is M'sieu' Vanward!"

CHAPTER V.

WHERE THE GROUND LED.

JAKE grudgingly participated in the restoration of Cecil. It was an ill wind to his plans that blew the young Englishman into the cabin. The edifice of sham good-fellowship he had been building out of the manufacturer's offer threatened to totter; but he assisted Pierre in massaging the exhausted man.

Cecil was not frozen; only badly chilled. He opened his eyes, stung by driving snowflakes and winds that were arrows of ice.

"Top hole, old dear," he murmured, recognizing Pierre and closing his eyes again.

"Drink dees coffee. And Jake, you work his legs so he no go sleep."

But by this time Cecil was able to work his own legs, for he delivered a vicious kick that sent Jake sprawling and staggered to his feet.

"Where's my bally watch?" he said, feeling in his pocket with his ungloved hand. Pierre would not let him touch the bare metal and told him it was about nine o'clock.

"Then I win," said Cecil. "I bet Sir Charles I could reach you in ten hours, so he owes me fifty pounds besides what I get from side bets in the club."

Pierre began to think that Cecil was suffering from the delirium often evoked by extreme cold—the prelude to collapse. But Cecil was suffering from nothing but a sportsman's elation. He became conscious of the presence of Jake.

"Afraid I kicked you just now, old chappie. Sorry. Is it safe for me to go near the stove now?" he asked Pierre.

"You come all dis way just for a bet, m'sieu'?" asked Pierre, putting on the stove the remainder of Jake's stew.

"Yes. You see Sir Charles razzed me all over London on losing his expedition here last October. It was ghastly. Thing like that sticks to a man. What made it worse was I happened to be an officer in the Boy Scouts.

"So I had to do something to bring up my batting average. So when Sir Charles

came over here I made him a bet I'd find you in midwinter without a guide. I soon lost him——"

"Sir Charles come over here? You lose him in de woods?" said Pierre, not yet certain just how much sense there was in Cecil.

"No; of course not. He's up at Cobalt looking after his mines. So I hopped down here to find you and bring you back to him. I don't need to rush back now that you have a witness that I did get here on time."

Cecil nodded to Jake. He was quite sane, and cheery over his triumph.

"You come all de way from England just for bet?"

"Not exactly. But do you mind if I gorge first before I talk? I know now that explorers' tales of cannibalism are true. I shall introduce courses in hunger when I get back to my scouts."

Pierre attended to him, while Jake lit his pipe and sat by the stove. Pierre understood Jake's desire to efface himself.

Pierre was not going to betray Jake, though he was still in Sir Charles' employment. Were he in Jake's place he would have thrown himself upon Sir Charles' mercy and related the whole history of his partnership with La Roche. But Pierre knew that the one thing impossible to Jake was to trust in the integrity of any man in the check-book class.

Jake's suspicions of every man on top would prevent him from behaving in any other way but that of a hunted criminal. Pierre could only await events on that issue.

"Sir Charles is in Cobalt, you say?" asked Pierre, after Cecil had fed enough to feel for his pipe.

"Yes. Fact is, I think we're about to find that lost lode," replied Cecil quite casually.

Whether it was the involuntary stir made by Jake to this thrilling announcement dropped so nonchalantly or a return of his old doubting caution Cecil took more notice of Jake.

"You haven't introduced me to your friend," he said.

"Pardon, m'sieu'. Dees is Jake. He stay with me all winter."

Cecil nodded; Jake responded with an inscrutable grunt. For all Cecil knew the man with the long hair by the stove was merely a taciturn habitant having little or no English.

"Your radio gave us the clew;" continued Cecil. "Sir Charles is up at Cobalt making experiments down one of his shafts. How's the set working? Still getting D. X.?"

Cecil went over to the set; the little Londoner who could get so enthusiastic after walking twenty-five miles through a blizzard was cooler than that blizzard about the tremendous fact of finding the silver lode. As to the connection of the lode with his radio set, Pierre was entirely at a loss.

"You find dis silver, M'sieu' Cecil? And you say my radio do eet?"

"Hold on, Pierre. Let me try it;" said Cecil, putting on the phones. "I must listen to the bally thing. I want to be sure it is permanent and not atmospheric. Yes; CKAC. You're still getting code from ships, I see."

Cecil was pointing to scraps of code Pierre had penciled on an almanac over the shelf.

"Is your young lady still singing at CKAC?" he asked.

"No, m'sieu'. She go to Paris."

"You must have a set that will get you Paris. I recommend the neutrodyne. If you can get Dartmouth with a crystal I wonder what you will drag in with a neutrodyne to this bally place? Tigers from India instead of your bears and wolves."

Pierre could not endure the Englishman's leisurely approach to the terrific topic of the silver lode.

"M'sieu' Cecil, what you say just now? You say my set find de silver. What you mean? Somet'ing happen I no understand. Dese beeg fellers write me a whole lot. Look at dem letters. A man offer me beeg money to sell my set. What shall I do?"

Pierre pointed to that pile of corre-

spondence and handed Cecil the manufacturer's letter.

FOR a moment Cecil's easy pleasant manner changed; he looked as ugly and suspicious as Jake at his worst.

"Sell?" he repeated. "Don't tell me I'm too late. I came here to stake out the bally lode. You don't think I did that walk for fifty pounds, do you? You've sold us out, eh? Who got ahead of us? Morgan's? Guggenheim's? The Haileybury crowd? Who?"

Cecil had not read the letter; that pile of official correspondence and Pierre's talking of a sale had for a moment convinced him that his former suspicions of the habitant were true, that the man Sir Charles had been grubstaking had sold them out. A hasty perusal of the letter, however, convinced him that he had misjudged Pierre.

"Sorry," he said. "You can sell your set, if you like, but you will only rob your buyer. It's not the machine that's getting your reception, Pierre—it's your ground. That ground must be a silver lode, possibly gold or tin, but most likely silver. I know it's there—deductively."

Cecil launched into a lengthy and learned lecture on the still undeveloped possibility of finding mineral lodes by their effect on the transmission of electric waves. He explained, as carefully as if he were in a lecture room, that the idea was not new even in Cobalt. An electric ore-finding company had tried out something similar in the O'Brien mines there some years ago, but without the advantage of the modern vacuum tube. He quoted the marvelous sending and receiving of that station in the Catalina Islands due to the splendid conduction of an old and abandoned mine on the site.

"I persuaded Sir Charles to come over and give the thing a trial round Cobalt. If we could locate some of the silver that had petered out in the old lodes there he could be persuaded to experiment with new lodes here.

"To my mind there's not the shadow of a doubt; the lode's as good as found. It's as easy to find metals by radio as to give cross bearings to a ship."

"But why you not do eet before, m'sieu', when you were here last year?"

"I didn't know last year. Radio was only a toy to me then. I've been studying the bally thing; thinking about your damned crazy, impossible, absurd reception. It's the first principle of science, Pierre, to butt your head into what's impossible and absurd. Radio means there's nothing impossible.

"Hardest thing was getting Sir Charles to see it. But now I left him at the bottom of a drive, sending signals to a man on top."

"But what he do, m'sieu'?" cried Pierre, exasperated at all this science and demanding conclusions.

"It's the ground, Pierre. Metal in the ground makes easy conduction for the waves. The sounds will come in louder. You get such wonderful reception because there's a lode in your neighborhood.

"I don't have to dig for it; I know it's there. I told you that what comes out of the ground counts as much as what comes over your antenna."

"The ground, m'sieu', the ground?" murmured Pierre, trying to grasp this new marvel of his wonderful set. The ground was something he could understand. "The ground! By gar, I go find heem now, m'sieu'."

THROWING on coat, cap and gloves, seizing pick and shovel, Pierre rushed out of the cabin to dig into his ground. The ground was piled with six feet of hard snow stacked up against the side of his cabin into which dipped his black ground wire.

The other men caught his excitement and came out to help. Cecil found a lantern which he lit, and Jake grasped the fire shovel.

The night was wild and dark; there were neither stars nor moon; their only light came from that lantern and the remaining flicker of Jake's fire still burning by the lake.

Cecil was too impatient to be a lamp-

post; he stuck the lantern on a hummock close by and grabbed an ax to chop away the snow. Besides, that temperature demanded action.

They soon cleared away the soft surface snow that had lately fallen and then they were balked by the hard frost-hammered ribs of the winter. The snow now was harder than ice; Cecil's ax merely struck chips; Jake's fire shovel crumpled in his hands; Pierre's pick was slow to penetrate that water turned to granite.

"B'iling water! We'll have to sluice her away!" cried Jake, forgetting his rôle of silent habitant, forgetting the charge hanging over his head, and taking the lead in the operations.

He brought out the big kettle of water left on the stove to moisten the air and began pouring the boiling torrent from the spout, thus drilling steaming holes for Pierre to pry open farther with his pick. The process was too slow; the ice was so hard it merely pried the pick head off the handle. Jake rushed back into the cabin and returned with an armful of tinder, papers, magazines and wood to build a fire on top of that obdurate ice.

The fire melted the ice; the water flowed round their boots and froze them from moving whenever they stood still too long. The black soil emerged from under the ice, but it was frozen even more compactly. It resisted the pick as doggedly as pig iron.

"By gar, m'sieu', I t'ink I wish my wire was dat blasting fuse you t'ink eet," cried Pierre to Jake.

"Wish I had a couple o' feet and a stick of jelly," answered Jake.

Neither men noticed nor cared that Jake was being betrayed; his secret that he too was after the lost lode was being shouted. What did it matter? They were exalted beyond all caution by the nearness of the lode, by the pressure of that howling night that swirled its snows around them with every shift of wind.

Sometimes they were submerged in clouds of writhing white; sometimes they were stripped clean. They were pelted by boughs torn from the trees caked with ice and crackling like glass. The forests around thrashed and moaned like the surf on a shore.

Pierre had made little impression on that ground. And it was hard to keep the fire alight. They were down now in a shaft of snow. Pierre had to stop digging in the earth because the lantern suddenly dimmed.

Its warm base had melted the soft snow on the top of the hummock and sunk into it. The water cracked the glass and the lantern went out.

"Get another lantern!" bellowed Jake. "Candles—anything! Hold the door open so we can see!"

Jake could only think of finding the lode; he forgot that the lamp on the table would not last in that wind and to spill the warmth of the cabin was to invite disaster.

Pierre felt something hard under the slush he was treading in. He stopped to reach for it and his fingers recognized it before his eyes.

"Come inside, m'sieu's, I t'ink find heem."

They followed him into the cabin; gasping, he shut the door, and held out his wet glove. In the muddy palm were large crystals of calcite, some showing signs of silver ore.

"I deeg heem up when I feex my wire last tam. You tell me dig heem deep, M'sieu' Cecil. I remember I go far till rock stop me. I dig up bits of rock.

"Ha, ha! We got heem now, m'sieu'. We build beeg fire and eat everyt'ing in cabane. We richer than Bank of Mon'real."

Pierre started to prepare a banquet; Cecil examined the specimens; they were undoubtedly calcite with fragments of native silver.

"First thing," he said, relapsing into his usual boredom, "is to—er—what do you call it? Put in our stakes and claim the reservations, or whatever the bally rot is, and tell Sir Charles."

"Just a minute, chaps," said a soft but ominous voice. "Those reservations go under my name."

JAKE stood with his back to the door; his rifle he held carelessly under his right arm. Close beside his left hand stood Pierre's rifle, which he had taken from its corner. Jake had cornered all the arms of the party except the rusty, useless musket of the Papineau rebellion that hung on the wall.

Pierre cried out at this treacherous ambuscade. He was for leaping at Jake's throat. He knew that the old prospector, drunk and desperate with those millions under his feet, was backed against the wall to fight for this last strike of his life.

But Cecil checked Pierre with—he did not know what; a word, a wink, a gesture, a faint intimation compelling Pierre to caution, to remind Pierre how quick Jake could be with a rifle. Pierre obeyed; his respect for Cecil's judgment had increased so much that he was content for a while to follow him. Cecil was smiling blandly at Jake.

"Of course, old chap, as you helped in this find I'm sure Sir Charles will recognize——"

"Sir Charles nothing. This find is mine."

"My dear fellow, you're surely not going to urge such a preposterous claim. You talk like an intelligent man. Your accent's almost South Kensington. I thought you were a Canadian."

"Why, M'sieu' Cecil, he's de fellow ——" shouted Pierre, unable to restrain himself, but compelled to stop suddenly for Jake's rifle was aimed directly at his mouth.

"No private affairs, Monsieur Pierre Ladouceur," said Jake. "Not till I get this land in my name. Private affairs won't matter so much when I'm the registered discoverer of the richest find in Canada. Nothin' matters when you've got the coin in America.

"Up with yer hands, Pierre, and you too, Johnny Bull! Both of you into that corner! I can shoot just as slick from under me arms."

Jake had caught up Pierre's rifle now, and with the two weapons covered the two men. He was calm, even possessed of a certain Satanic dignity, wary, watchful, and not blustering.

Pierre obeyed; his denouncing of Jake as the murderer of La Roche would not have helped, and he was certain that Jake was about to defeat himself.

"You can't do this, old chap, you simply can't," mildly protested Cecil, with a pained expression, as he too obeyed Jake's rifle.

"Take off your boots, both of you," continued Jake, ignoring him. "Now throw them to me. Don't tell me what I can do! I can stake this claim and go to the railroad and register it. You can't walk twenty miles barefoot in a blizzard.

"You two will stay here till the balmy breezes of July. You can't interfere with me while I'm doing business with my property. I scoop this time."

CECIL and Pierre stood in their stockinged feet on the bare floor. Jake made the tactical error of stopping to enjoy his victory before it was consummated; of boasting, of gloating, and so giving Cecil time to think. He forgot that Cecil's thoughts were quicker than his.

"Wait till I get Pierre's Sunday boots too," continued Jake. "And I must burn those hides on the wall. Pierre's clever at making moccasins."

He tore the pelts off the wall, and while still keeping the two men covered he opened the top of the stove and began stuffing the skins into the fire.

"What can your law do?" he boasted. "I'll have the laugh on you, won't I? Won't they think you was trying to get ahead of me? What'll be the verdict? I found the lode and you wanted to ditch me, so I stole your boots while I took up the land.

"That ain't criminal; it's just clever. It will be when the lode's in my name; it'll go in this country. Once you get a jury laughing with you, you win, if you can jingle enough coin. If there's miners on that jury—and there's going to be, boys—they'll wonder why I didn't shoot you."

"Well, why don't you, old chap?" Cecil

asked. "Why go to all this trouble? You could chuck our bodies out into the snow, or cut a hole in the ice and drop us into the lake. Wouldn't that be simpler from your standpoint?"

"I tell you why he no kill us, m'sieu'!" cried Pierre.

But again the rifle intervened to prevent Pierre's shouting why Jake wanted no more murder.

"I said no private affairs," snarled Jake.

"It's awfully good of you, old man, not to kill us," said Cecil. "But do I have to keep my hands up? We can't shoot; we've got nothing to shoot with; and my arms are aching."

Jake, after a moment's consideration, allowed them to drop their hands, and continued burning the skins. The process was not easy. The stiff pelts were hard to squeeze in among the logs of the overloaded stove, and the pungent smoke blew out into his face. Cecil began sneezing at it.

The young Englishman sat before the table with his hands extended in the manner of table rappers. He appeared to be resigned to the situation.

Jake gave most of his attention to Pierre, for Cecil appeared to him a negligible lightweight. Jake never took his eyes off Pierre, who sat poised on the edge of his chair like a tiger cat tensed for a spring. Pierre smiled a little, and curbed the smile. Jake shot a side glance at Cecil.

Cecil was tapping with his forefinger on the table as though he were practicing the piano. Jake bellowed a deep curse, picked up the rifle he had abandoned to open the stove, and covered Cecil also.

"Put up yer hands, mister," he barked. "You don't work that wire tapping on me. Pierre has been practicing that code stuff all winter."

Jake had detected a meaning in the drop of Cecil's fingers on the table; but Cecil only laughed, not at all abashed.

"Clever of you, old dear, but you should have waited till you had read my message."

"I can't read it; but he can, and he was tapping back. By thunder, you're right; it would be easier to croak you both."

Jake was perturbed at his underestimate of Cecil. This flippant representative of the capitalistic class apparently needed as much watching as did Pierre.

"Don't get peevish, old dear; you can't blame us for doing all we can. You've got us licked. I was only asking Pierre who you were, and if you really were such a rotter as you're making yourself out to be. Simply incredible, you know."

"He can tell you when I'm gone."

"Quite so. But a chap's got to do something. You're a remarkable sort of johnny. You don't mind if I get my tobacco, do you?"

Cecil rose to his feet, quite ignoring the rifle that covered him.

"Sit down or I shoot!" roared Jake, absolutely nonplused.

"Absolutely unnecessary, old chap. What possible harm can I do you by lighting my pipe? Got any of that Navy Cut, Pierre?"

"On de shelf," said Pierre.

Jake had to allow Cecil to cross the cabin. Cecil's blasé indifference, his consummate calculation of how far Jake would go, completely baffled Jake. There were no weapons on that shelf, nothing but Pierre's groceries.

Jake was about to push Cecil's boots into the stove when he coughed; his eyes became blinding balls of agony; for Cecil had thrown the contents of Pierre's pepper box into his face.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FROST DECIDES.

MADDENED by the pain and enraged by the trick, Jake began pulling his triggers, but before he could shoot straight Pierre had knocked him down with a blow to the chin. He was half stunned by the shock of his skull hitting the boards; he was blinded and choking from the pepper.

Before he could reach for Pierre's throat, a strangling loop of rawhide was tightening round his own. He clutched at it, loosening his hold on Pierre, and imme-

diately Cecil enveloped him in tight coils of the rawhide. He was helpless; bound and trussed on the floor. A cup of water was dashed into his face by Cecil.

"Pardon me," said Cecil. "Throwing pepper was hardly cricket, but you left us no other way. Good thing you went in for radio, Pierre, or we couldn't have worked that dodge."

"What dodge?" gasped Jake.

"Pierre signaled to me to take the pepper tin instead of the tobacco. I had wanted to dive under the table and grab your legs. He said 'No.' Now don't you bite my hand, Jake, and I'll wipe the pepper out of your eyes."

Cecil was wiping the pepper from Jake's face with a cambric handkerchief delicately perfumed; Jake was snarling, foaming at the mouth that these two youngsters had so completely defeated him.

"By gar, m'sieu'," cried Pierre, "I t'ink faster than you say radio she go; I t'ink millions of miles a minute how I beat dat beeg brute. I t'ink I jump quicker dan hees bullet; den I t'ink no. Den when you ask for tabac I t'ink of de pepper."

"You didn't do all that with your fingers on the table."

"I move my eyes, M'sieu' Jake; I wink radio. I signal pepper wid winks. M'sieu, I leeck you by radio. I find de mine by radio. Dis no-account Canuck, dis habitant loafer, put one over you smart Aleeck."

Pierre was fairly bubbling with his triumph.

"By gar, I glad I buy dis t'ing," he said, patting his set still swathed in its gaudy sash. "It do everyt'ing. It mak' me catch dis crook. First tam I see heem I t'ink heem crook; den I t'ink heem all right; now I know heem crook. M'sieu' Cecil, he keel de man dat bring de stones to Sir Charles. He keel Louis la Roche."

Cecil had been putting on his boots, smiling at Pierre's elation. Now, startled and serious, he bent down over Jake.

"Yes, m'sieu'. He Jake Grant, alias Jacob Griggs, alias a whole lot of fellers. He is wanted by New York police. De radio tell me dat."

"Why did you kill La Roche?" asked Cecil.

"He say La Roche try cheat heem. La Roche find stones and Jake lend heem money to go to Sir Charles. Both pair of crooks. Now dis feller near keel us and tak' our boots. By gar, I pull rope round his neck myself."

Pierre was vindictive; that brief struggle with Jake had not been fierce enough to assuage his anger, accumulated under Jake's rifle barrel.

"One moment, Pierre," said Cecil. "La Roche may have been in the wrong. Let's hear the defendant. Tell me your side of it, Jake."

Jake had hitherto kept silent; he did not answer now.

"Eef you listen to dat feller he mak' black white. He say you and Sir Charles crooks too."

"Quite a few people do, Pierre. Sometimes I think we are. Put something under his head."

PIERRE did not approve of Cecil's solicitude for Jake's comfort, and the strange interest he took in the defeated claim jumper. He returned to the corner by the radio set, holding both rifles ready, and then from sheer force of habit slipped on his phones.

Jake gave his story and with it a deal of his biography, his beliefs, his philosophy of the under dog.

"If you only had some evidence," said Cecil judiciously. "I really hate to hand you over to the police. We could use an expert like you."

"Dat feller mak' you steal chalice from de altar," cried Pierre. "He bad—bad."

"He knows more than any man we've got. It could be done. We could use him to open up the country. Put leg irons on him if necessary. We would be armed. He would be under surveillance but would be comparatively free. How do you like the idea, Jake?"

Jake's big body swelled under the lashings with his indignation.

"Nothing doing. That was pulled in a Queensland jail. Convicts allowed to

prospect because they found gold-breaking stone on the roads. But did they get any? Did they get any time off? Any extra grub? Not on your rotten life! The warden copped the gold and the credit.

"I don't work for nothing. Just like your gang; exploiting convict labor. Hang me; electrocute me; chuck me into quicklime; but I work on me own. And if I go out, I go out kicking."

He writhed like a man under strychnine. Pierre raised a rifle fearful lest Jake should break loose.

"By Jove, I admire the beggar's pluck," said Cecil. "He's quite right. I voted labor last election. Sir Charles is a socialist too—right wing. Politically, I'm with Jake."

"Maybe you give heem back dese guns and cut heem loose? I t'ink you Anglais crazy. You with Jake."

"Only politically. I shall leave the matter to Sir Charles."

Jake ceased struggling. And Pierre allowed himself to be diverted to Montreal coming through on the air. The reception was strong enough to get the sleigh bells in the streets. Pierre's mind drifted mournfully to Mimi out at sea.

"Will you give me your parole to cease from violence till I submit your story to Sir Charles?" Cecil was saying to Jake.

"M'sieu', I hear ship. Stop talking, please. I t'ink—I t'ink—eet S O S."

Pierre slipped off one of the phones and passed it to Cecil. Cecil held it to his ear and immediately forgot mines and miners, the excitement of finding the lode, the threat of the trussed ruffian on the floor; for faintly at first and then growing louder, fighting a violin solo that seemed trying to drown it, came the clear call of a ship for help.

Imagination carried them both far out to sea into the radio shack of some tramp or liner; they could see the operator tapping his keys while clinging with straddled legs to his seat bucking with the seas. Pierre saw more, for he was certain Mimi was on that sinking vessel.

"What we do, M'sieu' Cecil?" he asked.

"What can we do? We're two hundred miles inland, and maybe a thousand miles from that ship."

"By gar, m'sieu', I got to do something. Suppose dat Mimi's ship?"

"Don't make such a row, Pierre, and maybe I can find out. Dammit, it's fading. Let me try and read her name and position.

"No need to get excited. That signal will be picked up by coast-guard cutters and other ships. She'll be rescued in time."

Cecil was straining his ears and trying his utmost to command his small skill at code to decipher that message. His interest was more impersonal than was Pierre's.

"What I don't understand," he continued, quietly, "is Montreal still broadcasting its music. The navy johnnies always ask broadcasters to shut up when there's an S O S. I still hear the music. Where are you going?"

Pierre was putting on his cap, coat and gloves, and lacing his boots tightly.

"I go to Du Chene. I t'ink maybe dem other ships no get that message. You say, everybody say, my set better dan everybody's. Maybe I hear dat sinking ship and no one else. Maybe—oh, m'sieu', maybe I beeg dam fool, but I t'ink le bon Dieu want to tell me my Mimi in trouble.

"Listen; eet blow hurricane like when I was wreck'. I must go to Larry and mak' heem tell everybody, all de ships, all de life-savers—by gar, I wake up governor general heemself at Ottawa."

It was useless for Cecil to try to dissuade Pierre from that wild and unnecessary trip. Pierre's face was torn with anguish at every howl of the wind.

Pierre was reaching for his snowshoes when the table under which Jake had been half hidden lifted suddenly from the floor. It jammed Pierre against the wall. The lamp fell with a crash and went out.

JAKE had freed himself by burning his bonds against the red-hot stove. The rawhide, in a single length, came off easily after he had parted one coil round his feet.

The smell had not been noticed because of the burning pelts.

Pierre guessed what had happened, though he could see nothing; he had to turn his head sidewise to prevent his face being flattened by Jake's weight against the table. His hands were tangled with the snowshoes and for a moment he could not use them.

He heard a cry from Cecil and some shots. He managed to get a purchase with his shoulders against the wall and drove the table backward toward the door. He caught a fleeting glimpse of Cecil prostrate by the radio set in the faint glare from the stove; blood was streaming from his pale face.

Another shot followed, and a bullet ripped through the table, just missing Pierre. Holding the table as shelter for himself, Jake was firing through it at Pierre.

With a terrific drive of desperation Pierre catapulted the table and Jake against the door. Their combined weights broke the door from its bars and the two men tumbled out and crashed on to the hard snow, Jake falling under the table and Pierre on top.

Pierre tried to reach for Jake's neck, but found the table in his way. He leaped to his feet, threw away the table with a grasp of one of its legs, and then flung himself on top of Jake.

Jake had lost the gun that he had picked up in his first attack; it had been torn from his hands in the crash through the doorway; he now lost time in feeling for it. The two men, depending on no other weapons save their muscles, clutched and rolled over each other down the inclined snow till they landed on the level ice of the lake.

They fought not as men, but as clawing, writhing, strangulating creatures spawned from the earth's primal slime. Jake had the weight, the knowledge of the rough-and-tumble tricks of many lands; he fought with arms, legs, knees, teeth, and the butting of his bull head from his brute neck. Pierre had the elasticity that comes from clean living; he was able to shift his strains quicker than Jake, to forestall Jake's thuggery.

But above all he had youth that gave him a certain joy in the fight, ugly as it was. The battling blood of his fathers bubbled in his veins. He laughed when Jake broke his teeth on a button of his coat.

"I'm going to kill you; I'm going to kill you," spat Jake.

Pierre was on top, fending Jake's attempt to throw him by pressing Jake's wrist against his throat.

"You can't, Jake, you can't."

Pierre had breath enough left to almost carol his defiance.

A scurry of snow blown from a drift covered them and in the momentary pause their perspiration chilled.

"Lemme up!" cried Jake. "Let's go on fighting or we'll freeze."

"Dis de way I fight. A la mode lazy Canuck, m'sieu'. See. Get up eef you can—when I say."

Pierre held Jake's head against the ice. In that below-zero cold a few moments was sufficient. Jake's hot bare head had melted a little pool of water; his long hair had flowed into it; it needed but a few seconds to freeze again.

Jake could not lift his head or even turn his shoulder for the perspiration in his coat was turned to ice, and clinging, too. His head was held to the lake and he screamed with pain. He tried to kick himself free and he suffered all the agony of scalping. Pierre rode him, holding Jake's legs and back hard against the ice until his whole length was congealed.

Jake raved; he offered to forgo his share of the lode if Pierre would release him.

"No, Jake," said Pierre, rising to his feet, secure from his enemy now trapped in the ice and growing weaker every minute from the paralysis of frost. "I no trust you any more. I have to fight you again.

"Dis way is best. No pain, no sickness, no doctor, no hangman, no rope. And eet is warm under de snow, Jake. You just go sleep."

PIERRE staggered to the cabin and shut the door. Cecil was rising to his knees, just regaining his senses after that glancing bullet. Pierre, gasping for breath and craving for warmth, heard him moan.

He fumbled for a candle, lit it, and found his little stock of emergency cognac. He gave Cecil some and took a sip himself.

"Where's Jake?" asked Cecil.

"In de ice, m'sieu'."

Pierre was a more ghastly sight than Cecil. His face was clotted with blood and clawed with scratches. A hideous bruise was under his left eye, marking where he had averted Jake's gouging thumb.

But his splendid resilience of youth was reviving. He wiped out all memories of the fight, for he had a bigger one ahead, and he gave his orders to Cecil in the manner of a grand seigneur.

"You will find coffee, bacon, and all you need. I leave you the rest of the cognac. I go to Du Chene. And I must go queeck.

"Dat ship not lake ship. Dat ship is Mimi's. I hear her singing to me all tam I fight Jake."

"But you can't take that trail after a bout like this. If you insist——"

"I must, m'sieu'. I must send message to Mimi. I must save her."

"Let me go. I'm only scratched."

Pierre's face lit at the offer.

"No, m'sieu'. I t'ank you very much, but I must go myself. I been fighting lak beast, m'sieu'. I let Jake freeze in de ice. I tak' in wolf dat freeze night lak dis—so I beast too. I worse dan wolf.

"I must fight de cold to do penance, m'sieu'. I go by myself to fight frost dat help me lick Jake. Eef I let you go for me I be shamed all my life. Au revoir."

Cecil could only vaguely understand the exalted mood of Pierre, the medieval leaven that fight of bestial ferocity had aroused in the Canayen.

He watched Pierre go off and disappear in the dim light. With the wind behind him Pierre appeared to be almost skating, so swiftly did he disappear.

Cecil was about to close the door when he noticed the gun and the smashed table. He picked them up and carried them into the cabin. In the faint candlelight he saw the scratchings and clawings in the snow, heel marks and finger marks made by the two men. He looked, for a second, out into the dark.

Quickly then he went to the back of the cabin, took up a knife and the cognac and followed that trail of struggle down to the edge of the ice. The dim candle gave him enough light from where he had left it in the cabin.

Cecil too had instincts he could not deny. He too might be ashamed his whole life long if he allowed even an enemy to freeze within call of his fireside.

He found Jake; and began pouring the brandy down his throat and hacking his hair free from the ice.

CHAPTER VII.

NEXT DOOR—ELECTRICALLY.

LARRY did not hear the fumbling at his door handle. He was too busy that morning trying to get trains through his snow-blocked line, besides relaying messages sent through his station because other wires were down.

The door opened; the cold blast turned him from his keys; he saw what appeared to be a pillar of snow walking on the legs of a man.

"Larry!" cried Pierre, with the exhaustion of a runner reaching the tape at the finish line.

The mass of pine boughs stuck in his belt caught in the doorway, the release spring of them as he burst in scattered a small snowstorm through the office.

"Say, what's the big idea?" cried Larry, for the snow was melting on his papers. Can't you leave your Christmas trees outside?"

Pierre removed the shield of bushes from his belt, stepped to the door, and threw them outside.

"Pardon, Larry. I forgot my sails. I mak' myself into ice boat. I mak' ten miles an hour over the lak' ice. The wind

she blow me lak ship. Larry, I want to send message to ship—radio message."

He kicked off his snowshoes worn to slivers by the friction of the ice.

"Say, bo, you're nuts."

"No. I want wireless message to steamer *Argyle,* to Miss Mimi Breton. Tell her I send her S O S to every coast guard, to every ship, to all places long shore United States, to Newfoundland, to Cape Breton. Queeck, Larry, send eet."

Pierre was at the last stage of exhaustion; bruised and still bloody from that fight with Jake; kept on his legs only by that persistent idea, that image of Mimi singing at sea, calling and singing to him for his help. He had heard her singing in every roaring gust that had driven him before it; he had caught her singing, her crying on the strained antenna of his heartstrings.

"Nuts on radio," thought Larry; but he said: "If you want me to send it, write it out."

Pierre could not hold the pen, so Larry wrote the message to the steamship *Argyle* for Mimi at his dictation, and tapped it off. But Larry demurred at the vague tenors and addresses of the other messages.

"You don't have to send these. That S O S will reach every station on the coast. You don't have to worry."

"No. My set is wonderful, Larry. I get t'ings no one else get. I find t'ings. Some tam I tell you. By gar, I afraid dat S O S miss dem life-saving fellers and just come to me."

"You're the worst bug I ever met. Bragging about your set. It's a disease. But those messages are going to cost you a pile."

"I pay you later. I reech. I mak' millions wid my set."

Larry hesitated at sending those messages on such security; he was responsible both to his railroad and to his telegraph company.

Meanwhile the postmaster had come in anxious about his mails; a couple of half-frozen linemen; villagers attracted by a man carrying pine boughs in such an eccentric fashion; and old Hector Trudelle. They all had heard the altercation.

"Pierre not nuts, Larry;" said Hector. "He just t'ink too much of one gal and never come to kiss her. Ver' bad for young man. Come home wid me, Pierre."

Pierre explained his circumstances to Hector and persuaded the old farmer to lend him money to pay for the tolls, covering the one sent to the *Argyle* and the others to the headquarters of the coast guards in Boston and the office of the steamship company. Larry convinced Pierre that these last two would be sufficient.

NOT until they were all tapped off did Pierre sit down. His strain was eased and he laughed weakly, almost hysterically, as he told how he had found the trail through the woods impossible and had allowed the wind to blow him along the ice.

"Eef it all a mistake, eef it no Mimi's ship, I send another message to her, by gar. And Monsieur Hector, you get de curé. I get married right away. I marry Mimi by radio. Dey do eet dat way now."

By this time half the village had crowded into the office. Pierre related the wonders of his radio, what it had done for him back in the woods, without mentioning the lode or his connection with Sir Charles. He was impatiently awaiting Mimi's reply.

"Eet go hundred thousand miles a second!" he declaimed, talking loudly to keep himself from lying back on Larry's couch.

"But wireless operators don't," said Larry. "Besides, if his ship's in distress he ain't handling love messages. Hello, this sounds like it."

Pierre sat up, revivified, but was unable to read the taps of those keys that were spelling Morse.

"I'll write it out for you," said Larry.

Pierre read: "No passenger that name on *Argyle.* All well ship. Sent no S O S."

"There you are, fellers," said Larry. "No ship sinking. No girl. No S O S.

Take him away and wrap him in cotton wool. Smash his radio. 'Tain't safe for weak minds."

Larry turned to his other and more pressing business while Pierre stared at that bewildering radiogram.

"Take him away," cried Larry, anxious to have his office clear. "Put him to bed; he's all in. Maybe he got the wrong vessel. 'Tain't our funeral. All right, he can sleep off his radio jag there if he wants to."

Pierre had dropped his head on the couch to wrestle with the mystery of Mimi's not being on the *Argyle,* and had been suddenly overtaken with the sleep of fatigue. Hector stayed by him; the rest departed; Larry could attend to the less fantastic business of stalled trains and overloaded wires.

But the answers to those messages began to come—both to Pierre and to Larry. The steamship company and the coast-guard officials sent to Pierre asking if he could get the ship's position. No such S O S had been received by them or any of the navy stations.

These were followed quickly by severe comments on Pierre for sending such a message and on Larry for accepting it. Larry was asked to ascertain if Pierre was a responsible person. The life-savers had sent out Pierre's message to all their stations and cutters that the *Argyle* was in distress; the *Argyle's* reply proved they had been the victim of an error or what was worse—a practical joke.

Larry tapped back that the sender was a perfectly responsible resident of near Du Chene who believed he had received an S O S which he had felt it was his duty to transmit and had brought into the office at the cost of considerable hardship.

Larry did not wake Pierre, who slept with old Hector dozing beside him. Larry liked Pierre and appreciated what he had done; but he knew more trouble was coming.

The trouble soon began to pour from his keys. Every ship at sea, every cutter, every station along the coast began repeating the *Argyle's* contradiction that she was sinking. Broadcasters silenced by the navy began to register their complaints; dials that had been straining to catch the S O S wanted to know who had been shouting "Wolf!" into the ether; a budget of telegrams began to pour into Larry's office for Pierre Ladouceur, for it had leaked out who had started the rumor. Pierre was threatened with all sorts of penalties.

Then some one in a newspaper office recalled the name and the fame of the marvelous reception obtained by that operator in the backwoods. Larry then received a news-agency wire asking for all the facts he could get and would he rush through a photograph of Pierre Ladouceur.

Larry caught that thrill that was leaping from antenna to antenna all along the coast. He knew the ether was alive with questions.

The man who was vouched for by all the magazines of America and Europe had caught an S O S while buried in his inland snows. Somewhere there was a ship sinking that only he had heard. Broadcasters were asking their audiences to listen in to try and find that ship. Larry paced his office tingling, as if that shouting electricity was in him.

"He's started something," he whispered to Hector. "They're after him. A train load's coming through from Montreal."

"Police?"

"No—worse. Reporters."

Through the afternoon the messages poured in. Larry could not leave his keys, held by what was happening. The missing ship heard by that man who was still sleeping in the stupor of exhaustion; those tens of thousands of twirling dials and straining ears, it was like Larry's old days in the war zone.

THE door opened and a man entered.

"I say, do you happen to have heard anything of Pierre Ladouceur?"

"Heard nothing else," bawled Larry. "He's hogging the wires."

"M'sieu' Cecil!" cried Pierre, awakening.

Cecil caught Pierre and dragged him to his feet hilariously.

"It's all right, old chap. She's there. Your Mimi. She's at CKAC singing and calling for you. They let her. She owns the station. She's broadcasting for you like a millionaire's lost baby. She wants you to come to her at once. I heard her. Jake heard her."

"But Jake is dead!" screamed Pierre.

"He is, now," said Cecil gravely. "He died after I dug him out of the ice and took him into the cabin. I had to do that, you know. I fed him and warmed him and he seemed all right till I got that call from Mimi. He wanted to hear her.

"Then he sat very still, staring at the wall. Suddenly he took up the ax and I thought the old dear was going for me. But he began chopping at the wall of your cabin—and here's a piece of it, Pierre. It's chock-full of calcite and silver. You've been squatting in a bullion vault."

"My cabane?"

"Yes. Jake saw a silver streak where the table had knocked the paint off the wall. The poor dear insisted on staking out the claim at once. Wouldn't let me go after you till I did. Then he dropped into a snow bank and couldn't—or wouldn't—get up. Wouldn't let me carry him inside either.

" 'Get yer papers out first,' he said. 'I'm through. Tell Pierre these Canadian white blankets ain't bad. I'll sleep all right.' Then he—he went west."

A whistle sounded without; the Montreal train had burst through the drifts and from it poured a stream of city-clad men. Many with cameras. They did not rush for the station till they had ceremoniously handed a girl out of the car, a girl with real rosy Canayen cheeks and the laugh of a singer.

"Mimi!" cried Pierre, bolting through the door.

The big story broke right there; and the cameras clicked as the girl leaped into Pierre's arms.

"I only pretended to go, to get you out of the woods," she whispered in Pierre's ear.

The reporters gathered round and led them into the station.

"Say, if you're Cecil Vanward," said Larry, calling Cecil into the office, "here's a wire for you from Cobalt. I'll be damned if there isn't something about an S O S in that too."

Cecil read the wire and then passed out into the waiting room where the reporters were interviewing Pierre and Mimi.

"Beg your pardon, gentlemen," he said, "there's an appendix to your story. We have found the—er—lost ship. That S O S came from Sir Charles Oliver.

"He was experimenting with radio down a mine in Cobalt. The drive caved in and while they were digging him out he amused himself sending an S O S. We were the only station that caught it because—electrically speaking—we were just next door. Over the same lode you know. Fact is, we've opened a new silver field. Found it by radio."

The only person who complained of the length of Cecil's story was Larry, who had to send it.

"The Timber Trail," a complete book-length novel by Clay Perry, will appear in the next issue.

TO THE TOP ON A WIRE

HARVEY C. COUCH of Pine Bluffs, Arkansas, a millionaire and one of the political leaders of his State, began his play of the big game with a small stack of chips consisting only of the salary of a railway-mail clerk and the ability to think. Working between Memphis and Texarkana, he saw one day that no telephone lines were visible from his car window. Obviously, that section could use a telephone line as well as any other. Couch borrowed some money and put up the line. After that, life was a grand procession for him.

Here are his rules for playing the game: "With energy, ambition and integrity any one can accomplish what he sets out to do. Ingratitude is the greatest sin."

The Ace of Huskies

By Harwood Steele

Author of "Storm Child," "Loony Comes Back," Etc.

Last winter the heroism of a husky dog kept the overland trunk wires of Alaska hot. Here is an intimate dramatic sketch, drawn from the life, of such another as the famous Balto—Okemow of the Royal Northwest Mounted, "the finest human on four feet, in the Yukon or out of it."

THE Royal Northwest Mounted Police have no medals or decorations for gallantry or devotion to duty. It is a byword in the service that virtue is its own reward, and a few curt sentences in a dispatch form the only public acknowledgment of merit.

This fact applies as rigidly to the dogs and horses of the force as it does to the officers and men. Hence one may take it for granted that when a dog like Okemow, veteran leader of police teams, is given, even unofficially, a decoration and a grandiloquent title, he must have performed some act of courage, endurance, or devotion that is very great indeed.

The Ace of Huskies was the title won by Okemow, and the decoration that he wore upon his collar was a little tin disk, painted white and bearing a red ace of hearts in the center, like a fragment cut from a playing card.

Tiny though it was, this symbol of the love and admiration of Okemow's two-legged comrades was just conspicuous enough to cause strangers to ask questions. And then the policemen to whom these queries were addressed, who would rather have suffered hanging, drawing, and quartering than speak of their own exploits, would quietly tell the story.

"What does it mean? Why, that he's the Ace of Huskies—the best team leader and the finest human on four feet in the Yukon or out of it. Why, say, that dog—he's worth his weight in nuggets, and he's done more to prove it than any man in the force! Once, in particular——"

The name Okemow, a Cree Indian word meaning "chief," had been bestowed

upon the Ace of Huskies when he was very young by Sergeant Brentwood, in commemoration of the latter's long service among those people of the plains before transferring to the North.

In his prime, Okemow was in every way as worthy of that name as he was of the title and the decoration which he also bore. He was marvelously handsome, his head beautifully shaped, with keenly pointed nose and ears, his rich fur coat a tawny gray, deep ruffed about the throat, and elsewhere only partly concealing the rippling muscle beneath. He was also a giant—one hundred and ten pounds of plastic steel and concrete, and so tall that when, in playful mood, he stood upon his hind legs, he could easily kiss his six-foot master.

But most remarkable of all things pertaining to Okemow was his personality. If ever an animal possessed that very human quality, he did. He fairly radiated it.

First of the characteristics which, in Okemow's case, it embodied, was the power of leadership—of command. It was not necessary to see Okemow in action, whipping his followers into shape with one fiery look and carrying them along with him through perdition, in order to learn that he had that gift—the fact was to be read at a glance in his masterly face.

Wisdom, the twin brother of this quality of leadership, and without which all leadership is sterile, was also there—no sphinx, grown hoary with the accumulated lore of ages, had greater knowledge in its eyes than Okemow, deep versed in all the wilderness could teach him, had in his. Together, wisdom and leadership lent him a poise, a regal dignity, wonderful to behold, and he gazed in cool disdain on all but Sergeant Brentwood, who alone was ever able to melt that frigid stare into the tender glance of perfect love.

There were other things in Okemow. To say that he was energy personified is superfluous. No successful leader of huskies was ever anything else. In Okemow, however, energy was blended with a faultless self-control. Between marches, he lay upon the snow as quietly and apparently as lazily as a South Sea Islander in midsummer.

Yet, all the while, strangely enough, it was unmistakably evident that, at so much as a sign from his driver, he would leap to instant readiness for work, an electrified mass of activity vibrant and tremulous from the tips of his restless ears to his prancing feet and the end of his lashing tail, and that, once ordered to go, he would keep on going as fiercely and tirelessly as the polar wind. Unflagging persistence when in action, careful husbanding of strength at other times—Okemow had long learned the value of both.

For the rest, he had inherited the courage and determination of his dog mother, with her gentleness as his normal disposition—this last a trait not often found in huskies—and the endurance and speed of his wolf father, with a store of wolf ferocity to be used upon occasion.

Such, in the glory of his prime, had been Okemow, hoary old leader of the teams of law and order in the wastes of the Yukon, and battle-scarred victor of a hundred fights with dogs and wilderness. He was not at all like that, though, when Sergeant Brentwood first saw and coveted him.

THE sergeant, in accordance with long-established custom, was buying dogs for the police from the Hudson's Bay Company.

"If you'd like to git a pup that ye kin train yerself from th' cradle, an'll make as promisin' a youngster as ever I saw," the trader had announced, as they sealed the purchase of two grown-up malamutes over a glass of hooch, "I've got a new litter outside that'll suit ye splendid." And so the sergeant, more from good nature than from any desire actually to purchase, agreeing to look the litter over, had met Okemow.

Six little, whimpering balls of fur, lying half under the placid mother, made up the litter. Even Sergeant Brentwood, accustomed though he was to huskies of

all ages, permitted his grim lips to relax into the shadow of a kindly smile, for those pups with their fond mamma made a picture which one can only describe with that woman's word, "adorable."

They had just passed the eye-opening stage, and any one of the querulous mites could have been stowed away with ease in the sergeant's haversack. The first swift survey concluded, Brentwood emitted a thoughtful "H'm-m!" knelt down, and began gently to pick them up and inspect them in detail.

Now, between five of them there was not a thing to choose nor a shade of difference in their behavior under fire. Each, as the great hand closed beneath it, whined like a soul in agony and made its pitiful little struggle to get back to its now-anxious parent. Each, lifted through the air to the level of the sergeant's face, called to high Heaven for mercy and quaked with terror, unabashed. Each, set quietly down on the spot whence it had been hoisted, scrambled madly back to the shelter of its mother's flank.

Then Sergeant Brentwood came to the sixth. As his fingers neared the tiny body, the most amazing thing happened. Back went the little ears, up came the little head, the pansy-purple baby eyes filled with what was intended to be the light of battle, the baby fangs were bared, and from the little rotundity came a defiant snarl—the funniest, most ridiculous attempt at a full-grown snarl—but still a snarl!

Laughter shook the trader, and Sergeant Brentwood's rugged face broke first into an expression of amazement and then of unconcealed delight.

"Why, the little beggar wants to bite me!" chuckled the sergeant rapturously. "Look at him! Look at that! Oh, you would, would you? Bite 'em, then, bite 'em!"

For a full minute he worried the puppy with his big forefinger and the puppy fought back manfully, as gallant a David as ever faced an overwhelmingly huge Goliath.

The sergeant picked him up at last, while he still resisted stoutly. "Gosh, but he's a walloper!" cried Brentwood. "Why, he must weigh ounces more than these others! And look at the legs of him! Far bigger than theirs! Big as mine! Or bigger! The chest on him! Reg'lar little sergeant major, isn't he? Eh, you little devil? Why——"

Followed the final touch, sufficient in itself to win the sergeant completely. Putting the sturdy infant down, he patted its round head. Another snap or growl might have been expected in return. But no; this puppy was a sportsman from away back. Instead—oh, joy, oh, ecstasy for Sergeant Brentwood, dog lover!—the scrap of red tongue slipped out and licked the kindly fingers and the wee stump of a tail eagerly thumped the floor.

"Ah, little Okemow!" crooned Sergeant Brentwood tenderly. "Can you beat that? *Little Okemow!*"

There was an absurdly misty look in the big man's eyes.

THE purchase was made. Okemow, however, did not come at once to join the sergeant's dogs. For the present he was much too young—he had not even been weaned—and the savage mighties of the police teams would have devoured him at one gulp. Several months passed, during which Brentwood saw him only occasionally, before he was led away, a leggy strippling, to join his comrades.

Nor was he placed at once in harness. He was not yet strong enough for work, let alone strong or wise enough even to aspire to leadership. While two or three more months passed he did nothing other than run behind the sleds, and when the teams were not working he was chained to a stake apart from the rest, to protect him, in his undeveloped youth, from attack.

Yet, even in this idleness, he was learning, and the sergeant, watching him, was more than satisfied. His yearning for the trail was pathetic. No sooner did one of the constables, or the sergeant himself, appear dressed for a journey, than Okemow became a tearing, yelling, frenzied

zealot, begging and praying for permission to accompany him.

Out with the teams he seldom took his eyes off the dogs or the driver, and his ears were ever on the alert for the softest word of command. It was soon obvious that young Okemow knew the orders as well as Brentwood himself. Moreover, he displayed an insatiable passion for work. Over and over again, straining toward an empty place in the harness or actually running to that place and imploring to be put in it, he did his utmost to secure a trial.

The sergeant shook his head over him. "Boys," he told the detachment frequently, "that fellow has the makings of one of the best dogs in the North. But Okemow, old man, you're still too young! Just wait a little while!"

At last the little while expired, as little whiles must, in time, and Okemow's chance came. The trails were bad and the teams were working Siwash, or tandem, fashion. Okemow was placed in the swing and away went the outfit.

In half a jiffy Okemow, leaning into the collar and following the leader as well as any of them, demonstrated once and for all his fitness for work. Sergeant Brentwood came back delighted, and Okemow rejoiced visibly.

After the dogs had been fed and the latest recruit had been rewarded with an extra bit of bacon, the sergeant turned him loose among the others, to see whether it were safe to kennel them together. The older dogs were plainly jealous, but, beyond an occasional growling and bristling, offered the youngster no harm, and Brentwood went to bed confident that all would be well.

Toward midnight ten thousand devils broke loose in the dog shed. Out went the detachment, resolved to make peace with a black-snake whip and a lantern. They burst in on a scene as dramatic as anything in history.

Lined up along one wall, "keeping the ring," were all the dogs but two—a yowling, yapping, plunging mass. In a corner crouched Boxer, the kennel bully, soundly thrashed and, for the first time in his life, imploring mercy. And in the center was Okemow, a frightful figure, torn, gory, but glorious in victory.

Thereupon Sergeant Brentwood knew at once that in Okemow he did indeed have a prospective leader. One of the many demands made of a leader of huskies is that he should be undisputed master of the team. Okemow, at one stroke, had asserted his sovereignty.

Within ten days Brentwood had tried his protégé in the first place in the harness, and Okemow had proved himself beyond all doubt not merely a prospective, but an actual leader.

II.

IT was not until the winter was well advanced that Okemow performed the first of the deeds which were eventually to make him famous from Skagway to Nome, and Dawson to Herschell Island, as the Ace of Huskies.

By that time, it is true, he had won a reputation for himself, just as a squire of old might win his golden spurs in his first pitched battle. No leader in the territory responded with more alacrity to the shout of "Mush!"—in fact, the sergeant had trained him to the stage where not even a shout was needed, since he would move forward or to right or left at the mere movement of a finger. As for the team he headed, it was as much under his command as a troop of regulars under a merciless martinet, and he swung it after him as easily as his own tail.

This development had been accomplished through love alone, Sergeant Brentwood being one of those rare birds who know that some huskies, at least, can be taught by kindness, without the whip. All the same, Okemow, in spite of the evidence he had produced to the contrary, was still reckoned far from perfect. His wisdom in the ways of the wilderness was as yet unproved, and, when a blizzard threatened, Brentwood made him yield his place to North, the storm leader.

But Okemow got his opportunity all in good time.

A winter morning, in the days when the sun was a very inattentive visitor and had almost withdrawn himself entirely from the Yukon country, discovered Sergeant Brentwood alone on the trail with Okemow and the dogs that followed him. It was one of those damp and chill, gray subarctic mornings which in their way are more depressing than a genuine pitch-black morning of the sort men get at the pole.

The atmosphere was wet and heavy as the air above a steaming tropic grave, and a dense white mist hung over the ice of the river on which the team was galloping.

From his seat in the sled—he was traveling light and could afford to be a passenger—Brentwood could just distinguish Okemow's tail. So thick was the fog that nothing farther ahead was visible. Even the trees on the nearest bank were somber shadows of themselves, faint, ghostly things in a land where all was ghostly, where every suggestion was of death on all sides present, and even of death waiting, ambushed, there in the mist.

Sergeant Brentwood did not feel that impression of death in ambush. The trail, lying over ice swept all but clean by the long rush of vigorous winds, was good, and there were no obstacles in it, he knew, for he had already been over it a couple of days before.

PERHAPS, in his eagerness, he pressed the team too hard. Perhaps the dogs grew suddenly lazy. Whatever the cause, the sergeant noticed presently that Okemow slowed down.

Brentwood clicked his tongue angrily. What the devil had come over the beast, anyhow? Had he not allowed his eagerness for home to get the better of his powers of observation, and had the mist been somewhat lighter, he might have noticed that there was a rather frightened, wholly imploring look in Okemow's eyes when he halted, an air of indecision about the manner of that halting, and, preceding it, a curiously uneasy delicacy about the way he lifted his lagging feet, akin to the mannerism of a dainty woman crossing a dirty road.

Okemow seemed almost to have sensed that strange, indefinable menace in the mist and to have become afraid.

"Mush on, Okemow—*mush!*" Brentwood shouted, now quite fiercely. And the black whip banged and hissed.

Okemow, instead, cast another wan look backward—gazed forward again—sat down—and, as if on impulse, lifted up his great head and let out one long, blood-curdling, appallingly dismal howl—the dirge howl of his father's people. Whereupon all the huskies, taking their cue from their leader, threw back their heads and howled also.

Still Brentwood's intuition slept. With a hot curse, he climbed out of the sled and went forward. The whip was in his hand. Little more and, for the first time in his life, he would have beaten Okemow. He even raised his open hand to strike him. But Okemow's eyes turned aside his rage and quenched its heat. Intuition awoke. Supposing——

Urged on, now, by intuition, the very soul of caution, while the dogs watched him anxiously, Brentwood went slowly forward into the mist. Under his feet, suddenly, the ice quivered and—flash!—a dozen cracks starred its surface.

His heart beating wildly, the sergeant leaped back. Why the trail, hitherto safe, should have developed this unexpected weakness he did not know. But such unexpected weaknesses do develop, and to Brentwood that was enough.

A thought struck him. What if there were not only weaknesses ahead, but actually a hole? Others used this trail. He went forward again, very carefully, skirting the thinner patch as well as he could and ready to fling himself flat on his face should the ice split asunder.

Before him, presently, a black gulf yawned, vapor rolling up from it, and horror crept into the sergeant's face, into his heart thanksgiving to God, who had sent him such a friend as Okemow to warn him from a similar fate—in the gulf a tangled mass of what had once been

dogs, a half-submerged sled, and a corpse, floating.

Later the detachment made a great fuss over Okemow. As for the sergeant, he could only caress his leader's shaggy head, murmuring, "And to think I nearly whipped him!" while Okemow licked his fingers gently with a forgiving tongue.

Call the incident a manifestation of instinct or what you will. Okemow had guessed what Brentwood had not. Okemow had saved Brentwood. Homage to him!

AGAIN—the winter after the thin-ice incident—Okemow proved himself. A trusted comrade now, with years of service to his credit, he led the sergeant's team out on a long patrol.

There were several men in the party this time, and two other dog teams. None of them, men or dogs, had been over that particular trail before, except on the outward journey. They were depending for guidance on a single Indian, who went by the high-sounding title of "Honest John."

Honest John was inconsiderate enough to break his back when the patrol was in a particularly lonely and intricate piece of country. The police did their best for him, as much for their own sake as for his. But poor Honest John's spirit, having business elsewhere, went about it, and his body they left on a platform in a tree where the wolves could not reach it. Then the sergeant turned himself to the somewhat tricky task of finding the way unaided to the settlement for which they were headed.

The situation was really critical. The slightest false turn would find them utterly "in the blue," as there are no signposts in the subarctic, only inconspicuous landmarks which one must remember if they are to be of use. Moreover, two of the dogs were sick, two of the men sick, and food was very scarce, because the Mounted Police in the North travel light, as circumstances dictate.

They had a powwow—two sick men, two whole men, and the sergeant. What was best? The one and only answer was stark in its simplicity: "Push on and trust to muddling through!"

They mushed—through straggly woods where the snow lay so deep that one man had always to break trail ahead, and the thin trees cracked like the cracking whips in the intense cold; down frozen little creeks, maddening in their aimless meandering, treacherous in their propensity for opening under the snow that covered the ice above them and plunging dogs and followers into knee-deep, petrifying water; along profound valleys, chill as Dante's ninth circle of hell, with tigerish drafts blowing down them to search the marchers to the bone and freeze the very blood in their pounding hearts; over sunless mountains, livid and bleak as the mountains of the moon, and bare to the full blast of the balmy polar blizzard.

They mushed. The sun, shirking his duties in this ghastly season, left them early to get back to his bed. Moon there was none. Star there was none. The world became without form and void.

Perforce, they halted, camped, made their fire, dried and dressed the bleeding feet of the dogs, changed their clothing, shot one husky that could live no longer, pitched their apology for a tent, ate their suppers—a biscuit each and tea—turned in——

Came morning—or what passed for morning. Up again; found another dog dead—killed and half eaten by his cannibalistic comrades during the night; jettisoned part of their outfit, to make it lighter pulling for the animals remaining; another powwow; the answer: go on, trusting to strike some landmark they could recognize; thermometer sixty below, but, thank God, no wind. They mushed!

At noon they halted, very tired, the dogs almost spent, one of the sick men beginning to hold one-sided converse with his old mother, two thousand miles away. They were really looking for a river. But Sergeant Brentwood might very well have written in his diary, as the heroic Fitz-Gerald, lost under similar circumstances, wrote in his: "There are dozens of rivers and I am at a loss." More, he might

have added, as one other Mounted policeman added, at another time: "This looks like our last patrol."

Instead, he did neither. He sat down alone and thought—thought desperately, probing his mind for some thread which, taken up, might lead them back into the trail. Thinking, he suddenly was attracted to Okemow, who lay placidly in the snow beside him, watching his face. Into the darkness of his mind a light flashed.

"By God! By God!" shouted the sergeant, leaping to his feet. "I believe he can do it!"

QUICKLY he explained to his companions. All knew Okemow. None objected, for, as Brentwood argued, whatever happened, they could hardly be worse off than they were now.

Brentwood sat down again and took Okemow's beautiful head between his knees. The great leader gazed up at him with devoted eyes.

"Listen, Okemow," said the sergeant. Okemow listened very attentively and with an air of complete understanding. "We're in a devil of a hole, old man. We're off the trail—do you know that? We don't know where we are. Okemow, you've been over this trail before and you're wiser than we are. You must lead us into the next settlement—to Fort Starnes, Okemow—d'you see? Lead us in! Ready?"

Okemow wagged his tail.

The men eagerly hitched up the dogs, new hope beginning to burn feebly. Okemow ran to his place, as usual, but the sergeant wanted him to be free to scout for the way, and he was not harnessed.

For a moment Okemow's disappointment was great—till the sergeant talked to him again, when he began to whimper and to prance.

"My Lord, I believe he's got it!" Brentwood said to himself, under his breath. Soon the sleds were ready, and Okemow, on a leash, with the sergeant holding it, was at the head of the procession.

"Mush!" ordered the sergeant. Away went Okemow, like a bullet, and after him went the others.

Did he really understand? Did he really know where he was going? For two solid hours the patrol, at Okemow's heels, was in agony of suspense, unable to answer those questions and wondering incessantly whether they had done wisely to trust to a husky for the solution of a problem they could not handle themselves.

Right or wrong, Okemow was quite sure of himself and of his purpose, whatever it might be. On and on and on he led them, through woods, down creeks, along valleys, over the feet of mountains.

Sometimes he stopped, while he searched far distances with eyes that seemed to see the invisible, twitching ears that seemed to catch inaudible sounds, and a nose delicately scenting. But only for a minute—then on and on again, sure as the needle that points ever to the magnetic pole, remorseless as time itself, tireless.

At his heels came the men, awe-stricken, silent, and the toiling dogs, at whom Okemow cast many a backward glance, which plainly said: "Why on earth are you so slow?"

Instinct, if you will; chance, if you will; but to Sergeant Brentwood and the mushers of the North, a power that men know not, a memory such as men cannot have, a wisdom in all things pertaining to the ways of the wild beside which that of men is merely infantile, served Okemow that day and led them, when the two long hours were past, slap to the trail again and to the little settlement. Of their emotions when they saw it nothing adequate can be said.

There remained the supreme act of Okemow's career.

III.

HERE enters Ben Coote, alias Joe Farmer, alias Tom Marsh, alias The Wharf Rat, alias Hi-yu Jake, wanted for robbery under arms at Seattle; arrested at Dawson, the capital of the Yukon Territory, and handed over to Sergeant Brent-

wood for delivery to the United States marshal at Skagway, Alaska.

A hard nut was Ben Coote, big, strong, brutal beyond description, as ugly a typical jailbird as ever graced a rogues' gallery or left the prints of his dainty digits as mementoes of his residence in sundry penal institutions.

Okemow was five years old when Ben Coote and Sergeant Brentwood set out together on that long journey to Skagway, and in the full glory of his service as a four-footed follower of the king. Eight thousand miles of trail then lay behind him, eight thousand miles of battling through frightful cold and howling blizzard to and fro in the arctic circle, the whole an epic of sheer valor and fierce effort worthy the attention of the best of the old Norse saga makers.

Many and many a time, in traveling those eight thousand miles, had he helped the sergeant out of a tight corner. Their love, tested and proven and nourished through the years, was now as deep and true as only the love of dog for master and master for dog can be. On Okemow's body were the scars of honorable wounds; and he had never missed a patrol.

The Mounted Police in the Yukon, where Ben Coote's orbit swung athwart their own, were short-handed. The Mounted Police, for the work which is theirs to perform, have always been short-handed; but at this epoch they were even more so than normally. However, it has been their custom from the beginning to bid lone constables do the duties of regiments, governing vast territories or shepherding bands of thugs to justice single-handed.

So the superintendent commanding thought little of sending Sergeant Brentwood six hundred miles along the Yukon River with such a man as Coote. And Sergeant Brentwood, in his turn, thought nothing of the journey, either.

Of course, there were redeeming features. On this march, for instance, one occasionally met other people—once or twice a day, perhaps; one came across occasional mining camps—two or three days' travel apart; and one found other Royal Northwest Mounted policemen dotted along the river in detachments of two or three at intervals not greater than one or two hundred miles.

With Okemow leading the team, and Tom Thumb, an Indian, to break trail ahead in case of its being necessary, Sergeant Brentwood and Ben Coote started for Skagway.

ALL went well. The trail was good—Tom Thumb, as runner, was superfluous. They made excellent time—twenty, thirty, and even forty miles a day, sometimes more.

The weather was clear and not too cold. Post after post along the river was reached and passed; Skagway came within measurable marching distance, Ben Coote was docile as a lamb.

But this docility of Ben Coote, as a matter of straight truth, was not a favorable factor. It was really the reverse—the one flaw in the diamond. Wolves, menaced by the hunter's rifle, should show their teeth. Sergeant Brentwood knew that perfectly. Therefore, he watched Ben Coote—a process which alone tended to make the journey somewhat wearisome, for it was rather a complicated business.

Take the night performance. When bedtime came, the sergeant had to handcuff Ben's right wrist to the nearest tree and Ben's left to his own—that is, the sergeant's—right. He had to share with Ben a bed improvised out of two sleeping bags. He had to place his revolver in such a position as to enable it to be brought into instant action, and yet in such a position, also, that, in the extremely improbable but not impossible event of Ben's securing a certain amount of liberty by stealth, it could not be brought into action against Sergeant Brentwood himself. And he had to sleep with both eyes open, alert to meet whatever devilment Ben might devise, with nerves on edge whenever the gentleman of many aliases so much as squirmed.

The day's business was just as bad.

Never could the sergeant let Ben Coote out of his sight. In camp he had to make him work under his incessant supervision. On the trail he had to keep Ben always in front of him. In camp or on the trail, he had always to be so placed that he could at least see what Ben was doing with his hands—constant manacling being impossible owing to the cold, which required that Ben wear fur mitts, over which the handcuffs would not go, and constant binding being also inadvisable, as it stopped Ben's circulation, thus laying him open to severe frostbite.

At meals, they gobbled their beans and bacon opposite each other—and this was, of all the drawbacks of the trip, perhaps the most objectionable, for Ben's table manners were distinctly poor.

However, they progressed. They reached the last post before Bennett. And beyond Bennett was only the pass, beyond the pass, Dyea, and beyond Dyea, Skagway.

At Bennett, after breakfast and before the party hit the trail for the pass, Brentwood and Sergeant Thurburn, in charge of the post, had a private word or two together.

Said Thurburn: "Like any one to go the rest of the way with you? I could spare a man."

Brentwood said: "I guess I can do the rest O. K., thanks, now I've got as far as I have."

Thurburn looked at the sky. "Seems like a blizzard coming on. P'r'aps you'd better lay over for a while."

Brentwood answered: "Wind's north —at my back. Besides, I want to get this roughneck off my hands. I'm pretty sure I can make the pass before it comes."

Ten minutes later he was on the trail again. Sergeant Thurburn watched him out of sight with some misgiving. That threatening blizzard——

The time for which docile Ben Coote had been waiting had now come. Ben had hitherto made no break for liberty because he preferred to wait until he was near the coast. The sooner he could reach Skagway and a southbound boat after his dash the better. There would be so much less time for the police of both countries to bid for his recovery.

Ben conceived that the point where the attempt might most favorably be made was just beyond Bennett. The one question now was: Would he get the opportunity?

This depended on Sergeant Brentwood's watchfulness. All through the long march, Brentwood never once had relaxed his vigilance.

As it happened, for a single fatal second, at this, the most critical point of the journey, Brentwood was taken unawares.

They were eating dinner at noon. They sat in a circle round a small fire. Tom Thumb was on Brentwood's left, Ben Coote in front. Behind Brentwood were Okemow and the team.

The sergeant's revolver, cocked and drawn, was ready at his side on a log. The thug and the policeman watched each other under their brows, Ben sullen as a dog with a sore tail.

The extent to which trivialities may affect destinies is remarkable. Brentwood dropped his biscuit. Stooping to pick it up, he removed his eyes, for one instant, from Ben. In that instant Ben sprang.

THENCEFORWARD, only two men were concerned. Ben had reckoned on a third—Tom Thumb—and was desperately resolved to give both battle. But Tom Thumb was that rarest of all things among Indians—a coward. With Ben's first leap, Tom bolted. The party knew him no more.

And the fight proceeded.

Caught unawares by the furious spring of Ben Coote's one-hundred-and-ninety-pound body, Sergeant Brentwood went over backward with the thug on top of him. As Ben leaped, he seized the sergeant's revolver from its resting place on the log. His intention was to shoot his captor.

Brentwood recovered from his surprise in the nick of time. An instant more and there would have been another death in his corps' history. But, fortunately, he

managed, as he fell, to grasp the descending revolver arm, and the bullet which struck him, although it entered his body, did not kill him.

Desperation lending him tremendous powers and bearing up fainting energies even as they reeled under the shock of his wound, the sergeant, throwing up his other hand, got another grip on the revolver arm. Now Coote's left hand had him by the throat, the prisoner's knees were on his chest, and Brentwood's life hung on nothing but the maintenance of his iron, two-handed grasp on Coote's right wrist.

There ensued a terrible trial of strength. Apart from the panting hiss of gasping breath, neither man uttered a sound.

Coote struggled to tighten his grip on the sergeant's throat and at the same time fought to tear the revolver arm free from those tenacious fingers, while Brentwood, burying his chin in his parka, strove to escape the criminal's deadly hold, hung on frenziedly with his two hands, and exerted every ounce of energy remaining to him in a heartbreaking effort to throw off the inexorable weight that was crushing him.

Hampered by his heavy clothing, he found the last impossible. So they remained locked together, in awful immobility, in the primitive death grapple.

Presently Coote broke the silence. He knew that the fight must soon end in victory for him. He knew that there was now a thunder in the sergeant's ears, that red waves were surging now before the sergeant's eyes. He could feel his enemy's resistance growing slowly weaker. Therefore he laughed.

Only fifteen seconds more—this was his thought—only half a minute since he had made his leap—and all would be over.

But he had reckoned without one contingency: interference from Okemow. And, at the crucial moment, Okemow interfered.

FOR a little while Okemow, lying serenely in his harness behind his master, had not realized what was happening. Even after the revolver had cracked, he still remained temporarily puzzled.

Then the truth dawned in his doggy mind. This two-legged monstrosity, this foul-visaged stranger, was trying to hurt the god he worshiped, the god who, through five adventurous years, had been his heaven and earth.

That fact grasped, there was but one course to take. In spite of his hampering harness, Okemow, all blazing eyes and gleaming fangs, a tawny gray whirlwind with murder at its center, rose in his glorious wrath and flashed in to the rescue.

Only one moment was granted Ben Coote for action as the three combatants dissolved into snapping, roaring, whirling chaos. In that moment he had a second chance to fire the revolver. He fired at Okemow, the bullet cutting a long slash in the gray flank. Okemow apparently did not even feel it.

Weak as an infant and sagging at the knees, Sergeant Brentwood got clear of the mess. Through red flames his dulled brain slowly took stock of the changed situation.

Beside him were the other dogs, leaping and howling in delirious excitement. Before him Okemow, Ben Coote pinned beneath him, was busy with the job of tearing the thug to pieces.

Brentwood tried to call his leader off. As well attempt to call off the cyclone and quench the lightning! Okemow was totally deaf and blind. To save the life of his wretched captive, Brentwood, for the first and last time, took up his black whip and brought it into action.

So Ben Coote crawled to his feet, a torn and bleeding wreck without one spark of fight left in him, but still miraculously free of serious injury. Okemow lay licking his wounds and growling like a distant storm, ready at a sign from Brentwood to leap on his prey again, but sorely mystified to know why he, the rescuer, had received that beating.

As for the sergeant, his heart bitterly regretted the blows he had been forced to give, and his great desire was to take that shaggy head in his arms and pour the

balm of pity and gratitude over the smarting hide.

There was no time for that, however; there was only time for a word or two of commiseration. For the sergeant knew himself still faced with a desperate situation.

Here was the blizzard coming—already its voice was wailing along the river. Here was Coote, for the present cowed, yet bound to recover soon. And here he was himself, feeling the life blood pouring out of him and having, as his fading strength drummed home to him with every flying second, not more than a few minutes in which to act before he lost consciousness, if he were to save his skin and keep his prisoner.

The only possible way out of that situation revealed itself. Reeling in his tracks, he stooped and recovered his revolver. His teeth chattered, and the muzzle of the weapon wabbled like the needle of a crazy compass as he ordered Coote to throw up his hands.

Then, stripping the sled of everything but its robes and blankets, and forcing the prisoner to get in, he spread-eagled Coote face downward in the bottom, handcuffs over the wrists, arms behind him, legs lashed in a running noose feverishly prepared and tied to the nearest crosspiece.

The job was a long one, though Brentwood worked at furious speed, and, before it was done, his limbs were so much jelly and he could hardly see. Still he managed to straighten out the tangled team. On Okemow, watching him with troubled eyes, he bestowed one feeble pat before he turned the leader's head toward Bennett and the blizzard. With his last strength he crawled into the sled on top of Coote, dragged the coverings into place, and shouted in the teeth of the wind:

"Mush, for Bennett, Okemow! Okemow! *Mush!*"

IV.

OKEMOW, smarting, bewildered, irresolute, caught the faint order. It was enough. There came to him full knowledge that it was up to him, perhaps without another word from Brentwood, to face that blizzard and get back to the post whence they had departed in the morning.

That beloved voice had given him his instructions. No need for it to speak again. Alone, through furious winds and the swoop of racing snows, come what would, Okemow saw his duty clear. Like a soldier riding in blind obedience into the valley of death, an army's fate dependent on his efforts, he started.

Here was the test supreme, of strength and wisdom, determination, fortitude, and courage, of all the years had given him, of all he had ever learned.

"Mush, for Bennett, Okemow! Okemow! *Mush!*"

The blizzard met him fair and square as he led the team out of the little camp and pulled into the northward trail. With a joyous whoop it met him, a rush of blinding, stinging, whirling wings, a rain of pelting blows, like one who lies in wait for his foe, then leaps out suddenly, swinging a ponderous sword and screaming in anticipated triumph.

He did not flinch before the blizzard. The pointed ears flattened out, the long tail drooped, the great head went down, as a bull's sinks when it charges, the keen eyes shrank to mere slits, and he went on.

The going was hard. The team behind him did not like the blizzard—for which they could hardly be blamed—and only their dread of the sharp teeth of Okemow kept them up into the collar. The sled, loaded down with the dead weight of two big men, dragged heavily. Under the driven waves of snow the trail waxed soft and sticky, almost as soft and sticky as sand. But Okemow went on.

Terrible the wind grew. Up in those wide subarctic wastes, on the wrong side of the Rocky Mountain barrier, it has a clean, unbroken track for its advance from its source at the distant pole. It passes over mile upon mile of ice, and every mile makes it colder.

It is like a regiment of cavalry—demanding room to maneuver, but charging home, when it has that room, with all the irresistible fury of the momentum gained

by its long gallop, a tumultuous mass of roaring white squadrons, wielding innumerable shards of steel. Nothing can stay it. The poor, thin ranks of the trees along the rivers cannot hold it. Out on the naked ice of the Yukon, it attains a pace of fifty—sixty—seventy miles an hour. Its keen blades drive through wool and hair and fur like bullets and slash men's faces to the very bone.

Yet, whipped by it, flayed by it, braving its gigantic wrath, feeling it whistle through his heaving ribs, Okemow went on.

And the cold grew—or seemed to grow, as it does when the wind blows stronger. It caked Okemow's head with ice. It packed his feet with ice that made gory pulp of his naked paws. It clothed his body with ice. It froze the long wound made by Coote's bullet into a rigid gash from which the red flow constantly welled and itself as constantly became frozen.

Never in his life had Okemow known such cold—cold that numbed and fettered, cold that worried and gnawed. But he went on.

THE light passed. Veiled by a curtain of snow, the sickly sun, paling like a burned-out lamp, disappeared. All earth became enwrapped in a kind of white darkness, like sea fog, but denser, and always racing madly by, instead of standing still.

Emptiness took the place of the former landscape. The storm simply wiped out the river, the trees, and the sky and left the gap unfilled. In this utter blank Okemow was a mere speck, insignificant as a scrap of star dust in the enormous gulfs of space. But he went on.

And the noise! Imagine hell with the lid off and every spirit howling. Imagine the combined thunder of midday New York, Paris, and London. Imagine the combined uproar of all the guns of all the battles of the world. Imagine a thousand sawmills screaming together, a thousand boiler factories trying to drown them out. Imagine shrieking, laughing, howling, roaring—clamor that batters and stuns, that takes one's breath, leaving one quaking and unnerved.

Such was the voice of the storm, the music of its tremendous choir, wherein it told its hatred of this puny creature, Okemow, who had so long defied it and whom it was now resolved to destroy. Yet Okemow went on.

He went on—the slow miles dropping behind him, the slow team toiling at his heels through tempest-dominated solitudes. He was blind, he was petrified, he was weary unto death, he was bleeding, his tongue was a red ribbon hanging from foaming lips.

Why did he go on? Your scientist will tell you that he had no soul—that it is not so when one says that his great heart urged him, that his long training held him true to the sergeant's orders, that he was driven on, thrashed on, by deadly fear for the sergeant's safety and by a love for the sergeant that was stronger than fear, or death, or weariness, or despair.

Be that as it may, though he did not know whether the sergeant's utter silence meant that the only being he loved on earth was dead, though he could not see, though his steel-fibered muscles were long ago exhausted, he went on and went on—and went on.

TO that mysterious power which works its will through the long arm of coincidence is alone attributable the fact that Sergeant Thurburn, at Bennett, sent a man out to the dog shed to feed his huskies at the very moment when Okemow, at the head of Brentwood's worn-out team, crept up to the post, his long fight over.

Upon this chance, also, depended the result of that grim battle, for had Okemow been five minutes later than he was in arriving, he would have missed Thurburn's man entirely, and not all the howling or all the scratching of which the whole team was capable would have sufficed thereafter to penetrate the storm and bring the detachment out of the cabin to succor them. Hence the morning would have dawned on a string of dogs frozen

stiff at the door, to say nothing of a sled unpleasantly freighted.

But, as it was, the constable, returning from the shed, saw with popping eyes, through the gray dusk of the blizzard's making, a blur which gathered in that dusk to take shape, sway drunkenly into the yard and reveal itself as something unbelievable—a team of huskies without a driver, hauling with frightful effort a sled wherein lay huddled under robes and furs two chalk-faced, blood-drenched objects which apparently were, or had been, men.

And, thereafter, in a very few moments, the whole detachment was roused and the situation was faced and dealt with in the quietly efficient way which is the way of the Mounted Police, the entire outfit, men and dogs, excepting only the sled, being carried into the cabin, and water, hot and cold, sponges, liniment, bandages, brandy, brought into play for the help of men and dogs in the manner laid down by the best medical authorities.

The detachment examined Okemow. They beheld an animal half blinded by encrusted ice, slashed by the deep furrow of a revolver bullet, all four feet spotting the cabin floor with blood, one foot frozen, water pouring from the shivering body as the snow which caked it melted, the panting chest and the dazed expression giving evidence of terrible fatigue.

They examined Coote—now fully conscious, frostbitten only in places, and capable of swearing like a longshoreman. They examined Brentwood—a still, white form, limp and very cold, the flow from his wound providentially checked by the dam of congealed blood formed at its lips by the frost, the heart beating—so faintly that the pulse was only the merest suggestion of its normal self, but still beating.

Then they treated Okemow and said, "He'll live!" They treated Coote and also said, "He'll live!" And of Sergeant Brentwood, as they worked over him, they said, "We'll pull him through or know the reason why!"

Between whiles they tried very hard to tell Okemow just what he had done—the most marvelous thing done by any husky since the dawn of time—and what they thought of him—"the finest human on four feet in the Yukon or out of it."

But poor old Okemow was much too tired to listen, too tired even to do more than beg with tragic eyes for word of his master's chance of life, and could only sit there under a blanket, his frozen paw in a pail of cold water, while the man he had saved and the crook he had brought in, like the hero and the true Mounted Policeman he was, climbed slowly out, with Sergeant Thurburn's aid, from the black deeps of death.

THERE are incidents in life which are too sacred to be pried into by the eyes of outsiders. Such an incident was the subsequent reunion of Okemow and Sergeant Brentwood. Only this may be said of it—that Okemow came out of it with the ace of hearts on his collar, symbol of an appreciation of his wisdom and his valor which flourishes to-day from Fort McMurray to Beaufort Sea and from Cape Lisburne to Hudson Bay.

Stories by Mr. Steele will appear in future issues of THE POPULAR.

A SOLDIER'S PASTIME

MARSHAL FERDINAND FOCH, chief artisan of the Allied victory in the World War, acknowledges few amusements. Age and experience, he admits, have made him somewhat blasé. There is one divertisement, however, that never palls on him, he says. It is attending the Bixio dinners in Paris, where all the great forgather. It isn't the dinner that Marshal Foch enjoys particularly. And it isn't the company in general, for the great are no novelty to him. The kick of the occasion, for the eminent victor of the Second Battle of the Marne, is sitting next to Gabriel Hanotaux, the supreme historian, who never fails to tell him in detail how the war was won.

The Shrine of the Children

By Ernest Douglas

Author of "The Last of the Arenenos," "The Black Stone from Heaven", Etc.

It was a dead spring just outside the Indian village of Santa Rosa and it was sacred to Iitoi, the Creator. But Sam Slankard was impatient of Indian superstitions, and the gold fever in him was stronger than the voice of reason.

RATTLESNAKE!" was Gustin's first terrified thought when needle-sharp fangs clamped over the outer edge of his palm. He jerked away the hand that he had allowed carelessly to dangle in a tussock of withered galleta grass behind the boulder that served him as a seat.

With it came a Gila monster, leprous orange mottled with sooty black. As much by its own weight as by Gustin's swift movement the big lizard's tightly clamped jaws were torn loose. It writhed sluggishly in the gravel at his feet, arched its clumsy body on ridiculous short legs, and defied him with ominous puffs of its pestilential breath.

Gustin held up the injured hand and gazed, horror-stricken, at a semicircle of tiny punctures, from each of which oozed a drop of dark blood that was already drying in that blazing sun. Had he, or had he not, felt the reptile's slimy, forked tongue oscillating against the flesh, working the poison deep into those wounds? Such, he had been told, was the way of the Gila monster; he had always been skeptical on the point, and now, even after he had been bitten himself, he was still uncertain.

For the moment this inconsequential speculation crowded all else from his half-paralyzed brain. He was incapable of realizing, as yet, that deadly venom was pulsing through his veins. Idly he glanced at the panting saddle horses, the somnolent pack mule, the recumbent form of Sam Slankard in the scanty shade of a paloverde tree where they had halted for a noontime lunch and siesta.

He must have called. Some sort of a croak or scream must have come from his parched throat. For Slankard's six feet three of bony gauntness jerked erect and

bounded to Gustin's side in shambling leaps.

The pallid-blue eyes of the old prospector, overhung by bushy brows bleached by desert sun and wind to the same drab hue as the shriveled sagebrush that he trampled underfoot, took in the situation with half a glance. Out came the abnormally long revolver that always swung lowdown on his right thigh. One shot mashed the monster's triangular head to a shapeless mass, leaving the scabrous barrel and the thick, repulsive tail to thrash and quiver against the blistering earth until the last tenacious spark of life had fled.

"Keep it bleedin', George; keep it bleedin'," Slankard urged quietly. "Squeeze it hard. Blood'll wash the poison away. Where's that knife of mine? Here!"

He took the hand, and the gentle pressure of his fingers sent spasms of agony shooting clear to the shoulder. With a thin, keen blade he slashed at the lacerated flesh. But the blood seemed stagnant, congealed. Ruthlessly he probed deeper, striving to start a ruddy and cleansing stream.

"I'll suck it," Gustin gasped, recovering some measure of his reason now that the first stupefying shock was past.

He tried to lift the hand to his mouth. The whole arm was rigid.

Without a word Slankard applied his lips to the gaping wound and sucked hard. He spat out a mouthful of blood.

"Don't do that," Gustin cried. "You'll get some of the venom in your stomach."

"Not me! Know better'n to swaller the stuff. Got no cracked lips, neither, just now. There! We've got it started. You'll feel better soon."

It was true that the blood had begun to flow, but Gustin felt no better. A nausea assailed him. The giant saguaro cacti, the canelike ocotillos, the dull-green greasewood bushes, the glistening peaks of the Quijotoas, did a devil dance before his eyes. He reeled and Slankard caught him.

"Gettin' to your heart, I'm afraid." The voice seemed to come from far off, as though over a defective telephone wire. "Got any medicine in that war bag of yours that might help? I've been out of whisky for a week."

Gustin tried to think. It was exhausting labor even to try to remember the names of the two or three simple remedies that he had brought along.

"Nothing—any good—for heart," he mumbled, and stretched out at full length. "Leave me 'lone."

Slankard dragged him to his feet, rolled up his sleeve, and tied a red bandanna around the arm above the elbow. With a stick he twisted the handkerchief tight to shut off the circulation.

"Now you trot," he directed.

"Too hot. Want to sleep. Go 'way."

"Move on, I say. You lay still for five minutes and you're deader than an old boot. Make tracks."

Around and around staggered Gustin, Slankard both supporting and pushing him. He was sick, numb, resentful toward the partner who would not let him lie down and die. His arm was a throbbing torment. At intervals Slankard would loosen the tourniquet for just a moment.

"Water!" Gustin begged.

"Sure! You've got to have water. But go as light as you can, George. It's twenty miles to more after this canteen's empty."

Before they started again on their dreary grind Slankard hacked the lead out of a soft-nosed cartridge and poured the powder into the wound. To this he touched a lighted match. The quick, searing pain brought only a shudder, and Gustin lapsed back into his semicomatose condition.

For hours they tramped back and forth among the cacti and cat-claw shrubs, sweat streaming from them both.

"Not too fast," Slankard soothed. "Mustn't add sunstroke to our other troubles. Just keep on goin' so your heart'll keep on pumpin'. You're sweatin' and breathin' out the poison every minute."

At last, when the sun was sinking low, Slankard consented that his patient should

drop by the horses and rest. As Gustin dozed off he felt a folded shirt being slipped under his head for a pillow.

WHEN Gustin awoke the desert was bathed in radiance from a moon that rode high in the cloudless sky. Harsh details of the grim landscape were softened to indefinite outlines and blurred shadows. The weird yelp of a coyote echoed from the foothills off to the west. Peace, but a deceiving peace pregnant with peril for mankind and all his creatures, brooded over the scene.

Memories of the afternoon's terrible experience came flooding back. He clenched his fingers, raised his right arm. It was still stiff and sore, but he could bend it at the elbow.

"How you feel now, George?"

Slankard was bent over him solicitously. Gustin struggled to a sitting posture and answered faintly:

"Pretty well, but weak."

"No wonder! You lost enough blood to float a steamboat. But it was all I could do for you, to bleed you and keep you movin'. That's the system for snake bite, and I kind o' guessed it would be proper for Gila-monster bite. Scared to death all the time that I was goin' at it wrong, though.

" 'Tain't usual for a monster to bite a man, and then it ain't once in a hundred times that he shoots in enough poison to make much difference. You got a full dose, though."

"Sam, you saved my life. I would have died if you had let me. I'll—I'll never forget it, pardner, the way you risked your life when you sucked that wound. That was real heroism, Sam."

"Shucks! You *was* my pardner, and it was up to me to do what I could, wasn't it? You'd have done as much for me, maybe more, if I'd been the one to get bit."

"No, I wouldn't. I wouldn't have known how, for one thing."

"Well, the next question is, are you able to ride twenty miles between now and daylight? For all our water's gone but about a cupful, and the cayuses are beginnin' to suffer.

"We've got to get down to that Injun rancheria they call Santa Rosa and camp there till you get your strength back. Can't think of goin' on into the Quijotoas now."

"I'll try, Sam."

"Come on, then. I've had the horses saddled and the mule packed for an hour, waitin' for you to wake up."

Gustin swayed drunkenly on his feet. Slankard lifted him into the saddle, and he grasped the horn feebly with his sound hand. Old Sam bestrode his own mount, hauled on the mule's lead rope, and headed eastward.

AS they traveled Slankard alternately swore picturesquely at the slow-footed mule and carried on a one-sided conversation with Gustin, evidently trying to rally the young man out of the languor and depression that gripped him.

Gustin heard little more of what he said; he was busy with his own thoughts, revising his opinion of Slankard. Only the day before he had been regretting bitterly that he let the wrinkled old desert rat talk him into taking this prospecting trip to the Quijotoa country. For Slankard had been morose, scathingly contemptuous of the geologist's camp cooking, of his amateurish packing, above all of his "book learnin'." He called Gustin a "pebble pup" and scoffed at any opinion that he might express regarding the various formations that they inspected in their search for indications of gold, copper, or silver.

No trait or habit of Slankard's got on Gustin's nerves more than his incessant boasting of his marksmanship. But his boasts were by no means idle ones; the prospector truly was a phenomenal shot. Whenever he sighted a fox, coyote, or badger he would yank out the rifle that he affectionately called Fancy Ann, or the revolver that he referred to as Long Pete, and give a convincing demonstration of his marvelous aim.

"Guess you couldn't do that with that

popgun of yours," he would sneer. "Bring it out and let's see if the thing will shoot at all. I'm the best shot on the border and maybe I can learn you to pull the trigger without shuttin' your eyes."

It was only because there seemed to be no opening anywhere for a geologist just out of school, with no practical experience in mining, that Gustin had teamed up with Slankard and provided the outfit for an extended expedition. Before they were out of Tucson two days he had decided that his companion was deliberately trying to make him split the outfit and turn back.

Now all such suspicions were banished as unworthy. George Gustin was ashamed that he had ever entertained them; his whole being was permeated with a warm and perhaps sentimental glow of gratitude. In the hour of need gruff old Sam had shown his color, and it was true blue.

Slowly the eastern sky took on a delicate flush of pink that suddenly was transfused to molten gold. Gustin roused himself and looked about. They were crossing a broad expanse of glittering white. Clouds of almost impalpable saline dust, stirred up by the hoofs of the beasts, set his eyes and lips to smarting.

"Old salt lake," Slankard explained. "Whole string of 'em along here for five or six miles. When I first saw 'em, in '79, they was full of water and had tules growin' around the edges. But the country's been dryin' up ever since, and now they're nothin' but alkali flats."

THE sun rose in a caldron of brassy flame that presaged a scorching day. Below them lay a collection of square and dome-shaped brush huts set amid tiny fields that were bare and brown. Through the center of the settlement meandered a dry arroyo that was bordered with thickets of gray-green arrow weeds.

"Almost to water, kid," Slankard encouraged. "Bet these plugs'll swaller a bar'l apiece. I wouldn't assay more'n about a half per cent moisture myself."

"Sam!" Gustin exclaimed with sudden conviction. "I'll bet you haven't had a drink since yesterday noon. You gave it all to me."

"Shucks, George! I don't need water. It's just to pan gold with. I've gone without it for weeks on end. Now with you it was different. You'd been Gila-monster bit."

Just outside the fence of mesquite poles that inclosed the first field was a well with a crude wooden pulley. A somber-faced Indian in faded blue-denim overalls and a tattered palm-leaf hat was drawing and pouring water into a trough about which milled a dozen scrawny ponies.

Without a word to the Papago, Slankard crowded in to the trough, raising his skinny legs alternately to kick vigorously at the ponies. Gustin was dully surprised that Sam had not at least asked permission to water there, but allowed his own horse to follow the mule. The weary brutes buried their noses and drank greedily.

"Hi there, hand us that bucket," the prospector ordered harshly.

The Indian stood motionless, holding a leaky galvanized pail that spouted water over his bare feet.

"Perhaps he doesn't understand English," Gustin suggested. "Try him with Spanish; most of these border Indians speak it more or less, I'm told."

"I sabe it myself, but I don't talk it worth a cent. Can't seem to twist my tongue right."

"Well, I'll try. I've studied Spanish some."

"We are very thirsty," Gustin then stated in halting Castilian. "We are willing to pay——"

"Don't you tell him that," Slankard interrupted in English. "Pay 'em once for anything and these lazy scrubs'll want a dollar for every blessed hour we stay here."

Heedless of this protest, Gustin fished a quarter from his pocket and handed it to the Papago, who smiled, filled two gourds, and passed them to the travelers.

"'Tain't the way to handle redskins," Sam grumbled after his fourth gourdful. "What're they here for if it ain't to work

for white folks? I've never petted one of the skunks yet and I ain't goin' to."

"*Muchas gracias!*" Gustin thanked the Indian. "I am sick and must rest a few days. We would like to camp here and buy feed for our horses."

The Papago replied that he would send the chief of the village, Bartolo, who spoke much better Spanish than he. As he trotted off Gustin dismounted and sank down against the fence, utterly exhausted.

Within a few minutes a tall, dignified man of middle age, with wavy parallel lines tattooed upon his forehead and chin, strolled unhurriedly along the dusty lane to the well. At his waist were a revolver and a belt full of cartridges. In his wake padded four berry-brown, wide-eyed children, two boys of perhaps eight and nine and a pair of girls a little younger.

"What do you think of that!" Slankard snorted. "Injun with a gun on. And there never was one of the sneaks that could hit the broad side of a barn."

Chief Bartolo ignored Sam but shook hands ceremoniously with Gustin and bade him a simple welcome to Santa Rosa. It was the dryest summer that the Papagos had ever known, he said, and their own stock was starving. They had little fodder to sell but would part with some dried corn and a few baskets of mesquite beans. He proposed that the white men camp under a near-by cottonwood tree and turn their animals into the adjoining unplanted field.

Gustin gratefully accepted the invitation. Bartolo led the way to the cottonwood and would have helped unpack but for Sam's snarling admonition to "mind your own business."

"My friend is not feeling well," Gustin apologized. "But he is a very good man. He saved me yesterday when I was bitten by a Gila monster."

The chief joined his children, who stood to one side watching the strangers. His hand strayed affectionately among the coarse black hair of the smallest girl.

As soon as his blankets were spread Gustin dropped tiredly and closed his eyes. The Indians left, but others came, two young men accompanied by several plump but not ungraceful squaws. On their heads the women bore great burden baskets of woven willow withes, filled with the promised corn and mesquite beans.

Gustin paid the men more than they asked, and the Papagos all stood about, passing comments in their own guttural tongue, while Sam fed the horses and mule. When he started to prepare breakfast he profanely ordered them away.

"Dirty thieves!" he spat. "Steal everything they can get their hands on."

Gustin ate little and slept through most of the day, despite the heat. Toward evening he felt much better and his appetite approached normal.

Bartolo paid them another call, bringing his fat, grinning wife and the children. The obviously fond parents were delighted when Gustin gave the shy little ones some colored crayons from his portable map-making cabinet and showed them how to draw simple designs on paper. Then he clinched the friendship of the family by presenting the father with a spare penknife and the mother with a small mirror.

The chief's talk was mainly of the long-continued drought. He said that the village medicine man, Vicente, had communed with Iitoi, Creator of the World and Elder Brother of the Papagos, and learned that there would be no rain until the next spring. That would mean no fall crops of wheat, beans, maize, and pumpkins.

Unless many deer came up from Sonora it would be a winter of famine. Even the summer harvest of saguaro fruit had been a failure; scarcely enough had been gathered to make the sacramental wine for their dances and other religious ceremonies.

Gustin inquired delicately whether there were no missionaries among the Papagos. Bartolo replied that a few Franciscan friars had visited them and preached to them at intervals many years before, but most of what they had taught was now forgotten. He seemed proud that his division of the desert people clung tena-

ciously to their ancient beliefs and practices.

FOLLOWED pleasant days marred only by the churlish attitude of Slankard toward their friendly and naïvely curious hosts. He was continually berating Gustin for encouraging "them saddle-colored rascals" to visit the camp. Whenever he missed anything he swore that the Papagos had stolen it.

Gustin was sure that he was concealing small articles just to give himself grounds for complaint. It was all he could do, at times, to remember that he was indebted to Sam for his life.

"Have the Indians ever done anything to you?" he demanded one day in exasperation.

"*Did* they? The Sioux scalped my granddaddy right after the Civil War."

"But the Sioux are northern Indians and that happened over fifty years ago. Why hold it against these harmless Papagos?"

"All the same breed of cats, far as I'm concerned. Of course, they're all pretty much tamed now, but whenever I see one of the varmints I feel like takin' it out of his hide. Maybe before we leave here I'll shoot one just for practice. Fancy Ann's gettin' rusty."

Gustin recognized this for merely a pompous bluff and did not pursue the subject farther at that time.

Toward Bartolo Sam seemed to hold a special antipathy. He was forever laughing sardonically at the chief's revolver, worn merely as a sort of badge of authority, and challenging him to a contest of marksmanship. Bartolo's only reply was a polite but firm shake of the head. Then Slankard would cackle wisely and give an exhibition of his own skill.

Bartolo's four papooses had attached themselves with childish and affecting trust to Gustin. He whittled toys for them; they showed him how *ola* and various other native games were played.

As he grew stronger they accompanied him on long walks about the settlement, pointed out the nests of quail, doves, ground owls, cactus wrens, even a horned lizard. At first they understood only a few words of Spanish, but they learned rapidly, and as Gustin picked up a smattering of Papago, their conversations became less sketchy.

It was the children who pointed out to him the hut of Vicente, the medicine man. From within came the rasp of notched sticks being scraped together, and a monotonous but not unmusical singsong. A woman was ill with backache, caused by a badger, the eldest boy said, and the pain was being expelled from her body.

On all their walks Gustin carried his geologist's pick. His young guides never could understand his passion for gathering mineralogical specimens. They were continually bringing him oddly shaped or colored stones, and he pocketed their gifts gravely, as though they were of tremendous interest and value to him.

Soon he had made a fairly complete geological survey of the neighborhood, with the exception of an area on the west side of the arroyo about half a mile above the village. He knew absolutely nothing of that particular locality except that through a grove of feathery desert willows he had caught a glimpse of an unusually large hut.

The children not only refused to accompany him there, but were palpably uneasy and frightened when he even mentioned strolling up the last bank of the arroyo. They said that he must not go there, but refused to give any reason.

BARTOLO enlightened him as to this taboo, at least partially.

"We must ask you to stay away from that place up there," he declared, obviously embarrassed.

"Certainly, my friend. But why?"

"It is a very holy place. No one not a Papago has ever seen it."

"A shrine, perhaps."

"Yes. The Shrine of the Children."

"What was that he said?" Slankard asked excitedly when Bartolo had gone.

"Oh, he was just talking about a shrine that he wants us to stay away from."

"Did he say it was the Shrine of the Children?"

"I believe that's what he called it."

"Stay away? In a pig's eye! We've *got* to see that. I never knew it was here at Santa Rosa; thought it was down around Fresnal."

"So you've heard of it before?"

"Everybody in the Southwest has heard of the Shrine of the Children. Several men that I know of have been killed tryin' to find it."

"Why were they so anxious to find it?"

"Because there's a story that the Papagos have a big treasure stored there. I don't take much stock in it myself; don't seem reasonable that these miserable savages can have anything of value. Still, it may be worth lookin' into."

"Better let it alone, Sam. They seem gentle enough, but I have an idea that these Papagos can be savages indeed if stirred up."

That very afternoon Gustin missed his little friends. He went to the chief's home but there was no one about. On his way back to camp he met a Papago who told him that the children were sick and undergoing treatment at the hands of the medicine man.

"It's a shame!" he exclaimed to Slankard. "If those poor kids are sick they ought to have some castor oil or something. That old faker's incantations will just make them worse."

"Better not mix up in Injun doin's, George. You was givin' me the same advice not over an hour back."

"I'm willing that he should sing and pray the grown-ups to death, if they are fools enough to let him; but it does seem mighty rough on the babies. Let's go on over there and see what's doing."

"Wouldn't give a secondhand chaw of tobacco to save all the Injun brats that ever was born."

So Gustin went alone. In the gathering dusk he saw a dense crowd about the door of the medicine lodge. Piercing, agonized wails almost drowned out Vicente's measured chant. His patients were certainly in mortal pain. Were they being tortured as part of some heathen rite?

Gustin hurried forward and questioned several members of the group. It was two or three minutes before he found one who spoke enough Spanish to tell him what had happened.

THE two boys had found a wasp nest in a tree and brought it down with an arrow. All four had been badly stung by the maddened insects, and the worst sufferers were the girls, who could not run as fast as their brothers.

"Vicente is curing them of the stings," added the informant.

"Sounds like it," Gustin muttered as he pushed through to the door and looked inside.

So smoky was the interior that for a moment he was unable to distinguish details. Then he made out the half-naked form of the medicine man, tattooed with an elaborate design of intertwined snakes. Vicente was chanting solemnly and scraping two holy prayer sticks against each other. Beside him, ranged on a tanned deerskin, were several small clay images of various animals.

On a blanket lay the two little girls, their faces swollen horribly. They were beating their hands in the air and screaming with pain. Near them sat the boys, also showing the effects of the wasp stings, but bearing their torment in stoical silence. Farther back were Chief Bartolo and his wife, uneasy and sorrowful.

A big buck seized Gustin by the arm and angrily jerked him away from the entrance. Gustin turned upon him and snapped:

"Tell Bartolo that I want to see him right away."

The Papagos laughed. The idea that any one should even think of interrupting one of their medicine man's sacred ceremonies was humorous to them.

"Those children will die if we don't get them out of there. Tell Bartolo that I want to see him."

A hubbub of indignation arose. Gustin found himself in the midst of a mob of

threatening Papagos. Knives suddenly flashed all about him.

"I want to talk to Bartolo," he shouted again and again.

His voice carried above the din. The chief stepped outside. There was not a break in Vicente's supplication to pagan gods.

A lane was opened. Bartolo confronted the white disturber.

"Your children will die unless something is done for them," Gustin contended heatedly. "Bring them to my camp."

"Vicente will cure them," Bartolo replied, but in his tone there was a trace of doubt.

"How long has he been singing over them?"

"Two hours."

"And are they any better?"

"No; the devils are still in them. They are worse."

"And they will continue to grow worse. They may die."

"But Vicente is praying to Iitoi. Elder Brother will not let my children die."

The moans of the girls had been growing weaker, probably from sheer exhaustion. Now, for some reason, perhaps because they missed their father, they renewed their piteous wailing with increased vigor.

"You see, they are still growing worse," Gustin argued. "Vicente does not know how to cure wasp stings. I can ease their pain at once."

Still Bartolo hesitated.

"Have I not always been truthful?" Gustin pressed.

"You have always told me the truth."

"I tell you now that I can ease their pain at once and have them asleep in an hour."

The chief regarded him long and earnestly. Suddenly he turned and strode into the hut. He picked up one girl, directed his amazed wife to bring the other, and motioned the boys to follow them. Before the outraged sorcerer knew what was happening the family was trotting down the road at Gustin's heels.

After them loped Vicente, waving his prayer sticks and protesting with staccato grunts. Bartolo stopped, spoke a few scornful words in Papago, and kept on.

The medicine man went back to voice his indignation to the tribe, no doubt to predict that Iitoi would visit his wrath upon them in some terrible manner.

"For the love o' Pete!" Sam Slankard exploded when the party appeared at the cottonwood. "What you gone and done now?"

"I've persuaded Bartolo to let us cure these babies," Gustin answered. "I told him that I could ease their pain at once and have them asleep in an hour. Now I've got to make good."

"I'll say you've got to make good! If you don't we'll have the whole bilin' of 'em down on us, and nothin' but Fancy Ann will save us then. Takes a tenderfoot to be a regular, double-bar'led crazy fool."

Gustin was digging into his kit for his box of aspirin tablets. The children had stopped crying and were looking at him questioningly from between their puffy eyelids. They had faith in their pale-faced friend and swallowed without demur the pellets that he gave them.

"What's good for wasp stings, Sam?" he asked.

"My mother used to poultice me with wet soda when I got bee stung."

"We have no soda, but we have baking powder. Help me, Sam."

But the powder fizzed away to nothing when water was added. They had to depend entirely on the sedative effect of the aspirin to accomplish what Gustin had so rashly guaranteed.

Already, though, the papooses declared that the pain was leaving them. Gustin gave them as many more tablets as he dared and concluded his dosage with some laxative pills. In a surprisingly short time they dropped off to sleep on the white men's beds.

"What they mostly needed was to get away from the noise and stench of that hut," Gustin remarked.

Shrill yells and the booming of tom-toms evidenced that the Papagos in the

village were vastly incensed. After shaking Gustin's hand gratefully, Bartolo went off to try to quiet them, to assure them that the medicine of the whites had been effective.

"Blame lucky if we get out of this mess without losin' our hair," Slankard croaked. "You've sure let us in for a bushel o' trouble. I'd be travelin' right now, only I want to stick around on the chance of gettin' a look at that shrine."

BARTOLO returned shortly. "Vicente is very mad," he reported in his labored Spanish. "He says that Iitoi is much offended. I told him that while he could cure coughs and rheumatism and other sicknesses the white man's magic pills were better for stings. But he still claims that he cured my children in spite of you."

"Are we in danger?" Gustin asked anxiously.

"No! I am the chief of Santa Rosa and you are my friends. Any one who harms you must reckon with me, Bartolo."

Slankard and Gustin bunked down on their saddle blankets while the Indian parents kept tender watch over their offspring. In the morning the children were only slightly ill and were carried off home to be kept in seclusion until their bulbous faces and hands might be reduced to something like normal proportions.

Bartolo stalked back just as the white men were finishing breakfast. He silently accepted a slice of bacon and a slab of bread. As he ate, it was apparent that he was meditating something serious in his mind.

"I owe you much," he began finally. "You saved my *niños*. But my people will not believe it and are still very angry. I told them that you are very powerful medicine men, but still they would not believe."

"Yes. Go on, friend. What about it?"

"I have told them that you are such very great medicine men that you can even bring the rain that we need so badly."

Gustin could not suppress a grin of amusement. Slankard threw back his shaggy head and roared.

"I am sorry, but we cannot make it rain," Gustin disclaimed kindly.

Bartolo was deeply concerned by this intelligence. After turning it over in his mind, however, he seemed to dismiss the matter.

"We Papagos are poor people," he went on. "And this year is so dry that we have less than ever. It is now near the end of August and there has been no rain since last winter. Yet I must repay my debt. Anything that I own—horses, burros, cows, or land—is yours."

"Tell him we don't want any of his truck, but want to see the Shrine of the Children," Slankard whispered hoarsely.

Bartolo started nervously when Gustin translated this request. "It will mean death if we are seen," he demurred.

"My friend has set his heart on it."

Bartolo sat in thought for several minutes. "You must swear to disturb nothing and remove nothing," he said finally.

"You have our word. But what would happen if anything were disturbed about the shrine?"

"It would never rain again. Or the spring might even start flowing again and bury the whole world under water. That is the word that Iitoi sent to the Papagos through one of our medicine men many years ago. I think that this long drought has come because a burro got in and knocked some of the sacred stones out of place."

"What heathen rot!" Slankard spluttered. "Tell him to lead on."

The chief led them straight west for a mile or more. They turned, bore north, then northeast along a little draw. Every few minutes Bartolo would pause to make sure that they were not followed or observed.

THE first sight of the Shrine of the Children was disappointing. Gustin and Slankard saw only a circular inclosure of peeled ocotillo poles set upright in the sandy soil among the greasewoods just out of the arroyo. To one side was a large

pile of discarded poles. Bartolo explained that the fence was renewed every year.

There were four narrow, open gateways. At one of these Bartolo stopped and bared his head reverently before stepping inside the sacrosanct circle. His companions followed.

In the very center was a neat pile of stones crowned by an iridescent abalone shell. Just below the cairn was a narrow hole in the ground, some four or five feet deep, bottomed with coarse gravel.

It was from this hole, said Bartolo, that the sea had once gushed up and threatened to inundate the whole world. All the Papagos—that was many hundreds of years ago—were much alarmed, believing that their homes would soon be under water and that they would be drowned.

Many sacrifices were made, but none were effective until four children, two boys and two girls, of a noted chief, were sent to intercede with Iitoi. They were painted yellow and black and pushed down into the spring while the medicine men recited an invocation to Elder Brother. The children traveled to the under regions, the gods were appeased, the spring stopped flowing, and the world was saved.

"The Papago version of the flood legend," Gustin remarked in English. "There was undoubtedly a spring here. Probably an underground fissure drained one of those salt lakes off there to the west and the Indians thought it was the sea."

"Jumpin' Christopher! Look at this!"

Slankard was on his knees by the hole. He leaped in and scooped out a handful of gravel.

It was glittering with gold nuggets ranging in size from a pinhead to a pea.

"The Papago treasure!" whooped the prospector. "There was something in the old yarn, after all. Only the redskins never put this stuff here; it's plain placer gold."

"Washed by a spring from some subterranean ledge," Gustin added.

As he spoke Bartolo sprang forward and angrily struck Slankard's hand. The gold and quartz flew from the old man's clutch.

Like a flash, Slankard's long-barreled revolver was out. Bartolo made no move toward his own weapon, but stood regarding the other with smoldering eyes. Creases of fury across the tattoo marks lent his countenance an oddly diabolic effect.

Gustin hastily stepped between them. "Put up that gun," he hissed.

"All right. Only I want you to know that he'd have murdered both of us if I hadn't beat him to the draw."

"Nonsense! Bartolo is perfectly peaceable."

"This is a holy place," cut in the chief. "It is the most sacred place in all the world. It belongs to Iitoi and to the children who were sacrificed here that the Papagos might be saved from the sea."

"You are right, Bartolo. We gave our word that we would disturb nothing, and it shall be kept. My friend got excited when he saw the yellow dust."

"I know what it is. It is gold, which you white men prize so much. There is much gold here, but it shall never be taken from this sanctified ground. Not even though my people starve for the food that it would buy. For if the Shrine of the Children is violated it will never rain again in the land of the Papagos."

"Tell him to git out of here and we'll stake a claim," Slankard muttered.

"You don't understand that the Indians regard this shrine with fanatical reverence," Gustin returned quickly. "Let's get away before we are seen."

"Let 'em come. This is my mine and I ain't goin' to be chased off it by any greasy heathens."

"Sam, I owe you my life; but I am not going to be an utter idiot just to please you. You can't fight the whole tribe alone, and I am certainly not going to help you. Come on back to the camp and talk it over, anyway."

Bartolo was already edging suggestively toward one of the entrances. The white men followed, one eagerly and one reluctantly. Out in the greasewood they

parted company with the nervous chief; he made for the arroyo and they continued toward camp as though they had merely been out for a walk.

"You must not go to the shrine again," were his last words. "I did very wrong to show it to you. But you saved my babies and I could not refuse to do what you asked."

HE was scarcely out of earshot before Slankard and Gustin were in a furious argument. Slankard contended stubbornly that he was going to work the gold-bearing gravel and try to find the ledge whence it came.

"This is public land, not even a reservation," he argued. "The gold is there for the first man that comes along and builds his corner monuments."

"But the Papagos regard that spot as holy and sacred."

"What's that got to do with it? There's a lot of gold down in that hole—ten thousand, fifty thousand, maybe a hundred thousand dollars' worth. Think I'm goin' away like a little lamb and leave it?"

"If you have no respect for the Indians' religion you ought at least to realize that neither one of us will ever get out of this country alive if you violate their shrine."

"All I need to get that gold is a pardner with nerve. You pan the dirt while I take Fancy Ann and chase the whole caboodle over into Sonora. There never was an Injun that could shoot."

When convinced that Gustin's refusal to have anything to do with his fantastic scheme was final, Sam lapsed into sullen silence.

"Let's head out for the Quijotoas at daybreak to-morrow," Gustin proposed late that afternoon.

"Mebbe. Depends on the weather."

He pointed to burly blue-black clouds low on the southwestern horizon.

"Wouldn't wonder if we're in for some rain at last," Slankard continued. "Guess we'd better rig up a tarp."

They stretched a piece of canvas over a low, straight limb. Into this shelter they moved their beds and camp equipment.

Higher and higher rolled the clouds. Electricity crackled in the stifling, smothering air. Tom-toms again thumped in the village. Doubtless Vicente was offering up another rain prayer to Iitoi.

The storm was slow in coming. Gustin and Slankard lay down soon after their evening meal, but not to sleep. As a result of the morning's exciting discovery, their quarrel, the atmospheric tension, their nerves were frayed to the snapping point.

Now and then Slankard ripped out a casual but fervent curse. Gustin refrained from speech and lay watching the brilliant display of lightning.

It must have been near midnight when great blobs of rain began to plunk down on the canvas. These gradually merged into a steady downpour. With it came a grateful coolness, relief from the tension. Gustin turned over and slept.

THE sun was shining in his face when he awoke. The sky was the same hard ultramarine blue that it had been the day before. Not a cloud was visible. But for the lingering cool and several puddles of discolored water, Gustin would have decided that the storm had all been a dream.

By one of the puddles squatted Sam Slankard, engaged in a curious occupation. He had the rusty gold pan that was his most prized possession, after Long Pete and Fancy Ann. Into it he was throwing handfuls of gravel from a half-filled gunny sack.

He dipped the pan into the pool; then with a queer circular motion he started the water to swirling. He flipped out some of the water, and with it went some of the coarser pebbles. In only two or three minutes he dumped upon a spread bandanna perhaps a spoonful of nuggets and gold dust, that, being heavier than the quartz, had worked to the bottom of the pan. A grin of delight puckered Sam's grizzled visage.

Hastily Gustin pulled on his clothes and joined his partner.

"Richest gravel that ever was panned,"

Slankard chortled. "Talk about Rich Hill or the Klondike! I'll bet my socks this'll run five thousand dollars a yard, maybe more."

"You've been to that shrine," Gustin accused.

"Sure! Why not? Plenty of water to pan with now. We——"

Pi-i-ing!

A gun roared in the mesquites close by. The gold pan went spinning from Slankard's hand and his grin was erased by dirty water.

Out came Long Pete. Sam craned his skinny neck; his head bobbed from side to side as he peered in search of the hidden enemy.

Gustin felt his arms pinned from the rear. A brown, pantherlike form that leaped from behind the cottonwood was on Slankard's back. A third figure seized Sam's wrist, and Long Pete was discharged harmlessly into the air.

Both white men were borne to the ground under an avalanche of Indians. Bartolo himself leaned over and grabbed the revolver.

A few words were spoken by the chief in Papago. Gustin was released. Shakily he stood up and looked into the set, hostile faces of twoscore Papagos. Vicente leered at him triumphantly, menacingly.

"You violated the Shrine of the Children," Bartolo charged, all trace of friendliness gone from his demeanor. "You broke your word."

"How do you know?" Gustin temporized.

"We followed the tracks. And here is the proof, the shiny gravel itself."

"There was only one set of tracks."

"We know that the old man, whom our people call Mad Dog, was the one who stole to the shrine in the dark, like a skulking coyote, and brought away this sack of gravel. But you were helping him wash out the gold. White men are never to be trusted where gold is concerned. I should have known better."

"It is true that my friend violated your holy place, Bartolo. But he did so without my knowledge and against my wishes. I think that he is indeed a little mad. Now I ask that you deliver him into my keeping and we shall go away from your country, never to return."

"No! No!" shrilled Vicente. "They have desecrated the sacred shrine and it will never rain again in Papagueria until they have been sacrificed to Iitoi."

GUSTIN'S blood froze. Until now he had never doubted that he would in some way be able to persuade their captors to grant them their freedom. This threat of sacrifice sounded ominous indeed.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, George," gurgled Slankard, who was still held flat on his back. "They ain't got the nerve to do a thing to a white man."

"It will rain again," Gustin asserted, but he could not keep a tremor out of his voice.

"It rained last night," Bartolo admitted. "But where are the clouds to-day? All gone. Elder Brother is angry and he will send no more rain. Unless, as Vicente says, he can be appeased by a sacrifice."

"And how are we to be sacrificed?"

"We do not know yet. I shall send at once to Anekam for Alvaro. He is the oldest and wisest medicine man of our people and he will tell us what to do.

"Now we shall take you to a house in the village until Alvaro comes. He should be here by noon."

Slankard, fuming and glowering, was allowed to rise. The prisoners were escorted through Santa Rosa to a hut close beside the medicine lodge. Women and children lined the way, screaming epithets and accusations. One small boy sicked a yellow dog on the whites, but Bartolo kicked the cur away.

Amid the throng Gustin espied Bartolo's children. Unlike the rest, they were silent, and he fancied that he read pity in their still swollen faces. They were the only friends he had left.

The larger of the two girls suddenly darted out and seized his hand, whispering some quick words that he did not catch. Her mother immediately pulled her back.

A moment later Gustin and Sam were pushed into their prison. The interior was unfurnished. Gustin dropped on the earthen floor and buried his face in his arms.

"Don't hold it against me too hard, kid," Sam pleaded, laying an apologetic hand upon his shoulder. "I didn't have any idea they could get the drop on us like they did. But we'll find a way out of this pickle yet; you see if we don't."

"I'm not blaming you, Sam. You—you just used bad judgment. And, as Bartolo says, few white men are to be trusted where gold is concerned. But I was just thinking—thinking——"

"Thinkin' what, George?"

"Here we are less than a hundred miles from Tucson, a modern city with a great State university, cathedrals, railroads, automobiles, moving pictures—all the trappings of what is called civilization in the twentieth century. And we are to be sacrificed to heathen deities because you shoveled some gravel into a sack and a savage priest fancies that you have condemned the land to eternal drought. It's positively amazing."

"Yeah; it's kind of funny, all right. Take it from me, there's a lot about the Indians of the Southwest that no white man has ever found out or will find out. All I've ever learnt about 'em for certain sure is that down at bottom they're all cowardly scum and there never was a one of 'em that could shoot a gun.

"I'm bankin' on them facts to get us out of this trouble. And in the end I'm goin' to have that placer gold."

The hours dragged wearily. Every minute or so Gustin glanced feverishly at his watch, longing for the arrival of the noon hour and the end of this intolerable suspense. It was hot and steaming in the wikiup, but they bore it rather than attempt to join the ring of stern-faced Papagos in the comparatively cool shade of the mesquite tree just outside.

It was past one when Vicente escorted to the door an ancient, wrinkled man whose attire consisted of a dirty turban, a cotton shirt that had once been a flour bag, and a girdle of coyote tails. They regarded the captives malevolently a few minutes, then went away. From the medicine lodge reverberated a certain rapid tom-tom beat that, Gustin had learned, was a summons for the inhabitants of the village to gather for a powwow or ceremony.

A few minutes later Bartolo came and beckoned them without. Again they were surrounded by armed guards. Packed into the space about the adjacent huts were Papagos whose clamorous vituperations filled the air.

"And not a cloud in the sky yet," Slankard groaned after a swift glance about the horizon.

"The medicine men have talked with Iitoi and they say that you must dance the rain dance beside the holy shrine that you have impiously defiled," Bartolo informed them. "Then Elder Brother may relent and allow the rain to come again."

A wave of relief enveloped Gustin. So they were not to be killed, after all, merely compelled to gambol through some desert rigadoon. He almost laughed.

"Ask him how long," Sam prompted. "Sometimes these Injun dances last a danged long time."

"How long are we to dance?" Gustin inquired.

"Until it rains."

"Phe-e-ew!" Sam whistled. Gustin was plunged from the peaks of hope to the depths of despair. He was sick, drunkenly sick, as he had been the day he was bitten by the Gila monster.

The Indians noted his distress and laughed tauntingly. He threw back his head, squared his shoulders. Even the Papagos should never say that he was a coward.

A LONG, noisy procession moved across the burning sands of the arroyo, through the desert willows, and on toward the Shrine of the Children. Gustin's eyes were fastened on the southwestern horizon, where the storm clouds had appeared the previous day.

"The drought's busted," Sam asserted

confidently. "Last night's rain was only a starter. There'll be another one along before sundown."

Outside the shrine the procession halted. The Papagos crowded around the fence or climbed upon the pile of old ocotillo poles for a better view of the impending ceremonial.

The medicine men withdrew to one side and conferred briefly. Then the white men were signaled to step inside the inclosure. A drum boomed. Vicente pranced around briskly, lifting his feet high off the ground and bending his body forward with an odd bobbing motion.

"Dance like that," Bartolo directed. "And if Iitoi sends rain you shall be spared."

Too shaky to feel ridiculous, Gustin emulated the movements of Vicente as best he could. Beside him shuffled Sam Slankard, reminding him of a sand-hill crane that he had seen a few weeks before on the San Pedro River.

"You're just as much to blame as I am for gettin' us into this," Sam growled "If you hadn't took them kids away from the old fraud he never would have thought up this fool stunt."

Gustin did not answer. Why waste breath quarreling over the responsibility for their predicament?

"Doin' a crazy dance right on top of the richest placer ground on earth," Slankard puffed a little later. "Look down into that hole. You'll never see anything like that again."

Sweat was rolling off the dancers. Through the soles of their heavy shoes the hot earth was frying and baking their feet.

Gustin limped, began to falter. The Papagos yelled critically. A stone came sailing through the air and took him between the shoulders. He got back into time with the drum, shook his tortured feet with all the energy that he could muster.

"Water!" he gasped the next time he passed Bartolo.

"It is forbidden," the chief replied.

So! No doubt the medicine men figured that two or three hours of this so-called dancing, under the blazing sun and without water, would finish them. It probably would. Gustin looked at his watch but could not see the hands for the perspiration in his eyes.

Suddenly a tiny figure stood before him. It was one of Bartolo's sons. Into Gustin's hands he thrust a dripping gourd.

Gustin stopped, carried the gourd to his mouth. His parched and swelling tongue tasted water. Then the gourd was violently dashed from his lips.

Vicente was grinding it into the dust with his heel. With a sweep of his hand he knocked the boy sprawling. Howling with pain and fright, the child ran away.

Soon after that Gustin passed into a sort of daze. The motions of his legs and feet were purely mechanical. The monotonous beat of the drum battered at his aching brain like some giant's hammer. Some of the Indians had begun to sing.

Things began to go dark before his eyes. He supposed that this was the beginning of total insensibility, until Slankard pounded him on the back and howled:

"Look at the sky, George."

He raised his eyes. The sun was behind a thick bank of clouds.

"Eatoy, or whatever it is they call the old bird, is sure with us," Sam jubilated. "It'll be rainin' pitchforks in ten minutes."

Gustin was too tired and numb fully to realize what was happening. He knew only vaguely that the end of his unbearable torment was in sight. His failing senses told him that the atmosphere was less torrid and oppressive.

Some one prodded him with a sharp stick. He revived slightly and was able to keep on with the dance.

But the rain would not come. The air was deathly still. It grew darker and darker until Gustin could barely see the Papagos beyond the fence.

Louder and louder sang the Indians, that Iitoi might hear their petition and no longer hold back the blessed rain.

The sky was rent by a lightning flash

that revealed every detail of the landscape as plainly as though the midday sun were shining. This was accompanied by a crash that, for a moment, Gustin thought had burst his eardrums.

Red flames suddenly leaped upward outside the fence. The lightning had struck the corded ocotillo poles and set them afire.

The song of the Indians was hushed. Iitoi had spoken, but with a thunderbolt, not the much-desired rain.

"Moá! Moá!" screeched Vicente. This, Gustin knew, meant, "Kill! Kill!" The medicine man was calling upon his tribesmen to slay the white strangers.

Before his words could have their intended effect another bolt struck a palo fierro some fifty yards to the west. The limbs of the tree were outlined in eerie bluish flame.

Panic-stricken, the Papagos broke and fled. With them scampered the medicine men. This display of Iitoi's wrath was too much even for Chief Bartolo.

Gustin and Slankard stood alone beside the shrine. Sam cackled gleefully, jigged through a few more steps of their propitiatory dance. The man must be made of iron.

Then came the rain. Came in blinding, drenching sheets. Its chill touch recalled a spark of Gustin's flickering strength, but it was only a spark. He collapsed into Slankard's arms.

WHEN he recovered consciousness he sat up with a jerk. His aching muscles and blistered feet at once brought back the memory of the pagan ceremonial in which he had figured so prominently. But where was he now? He could hear the rain still splashing down from the heavens, but he was in a dry place. His clothes were soaked.

"Sam! Are you here?"

There was no reply.

Above the steady patter of the rain he caught the thud of hoofs. Some one struck a match. By its flare Gustin saw Sam Slankard, water streaming from his garments.

"Where are we, Sam?"

"Awake, George? Why, I carried you to that brush hut in the creek bottom just down from the shrine. Rolled you in a puddle on the way, and you wasn't so far gone but what you could drink about four gallons. Don't remember that, hey? Some dance we had, wasn't it, kid?"

Slankard groped around in the dark, collected some loose sticks, and kindled a tiny fire.

"If you're able, we'll start just as soon as I can wash out one pan of gravel," he said. "It may be that we're heroes now, havin' danced the rain back, but I calculate them medicine men have got somethin' else cooked up against us by this time. Lightnin' killed one buck, and they'll probably blame that on us."

"For God's sake, don't wait to pan gold," Gustin implored. "Let's go right now. If they find out that we have violated their shrine again they'll be just that much angrier."

"Got to have some of the stuff to make folks' eyes bulge out when we get to Tucson, haven't we? And if we've got the proof of our story we can get some good men to come back here with us and help us stand off the Papagos while we work the whole deposit."

BEFORE Gustin could protest further, Slankard was gone. In four or five minutes he returned with a partially filled sack and his gold pan.

"Sam, drop that and let's go."

"Build up the fire a little bit, George, so's I can see how to work. We got plenty of time. The Injuns won't dare come back here as long as this rain and lightnin' keeps up. Besides, I've got Fancy Ann. Pete was gone, but Ann was still in camp. And here's your gun."

With incredible speed, and making no attempt to save the fine gold, Slankard panned until the sack was empty. The nuggets he stuffed into a slim buckskin poke.

"Now are you ready?" Gustin fretted.

"Keep your shirt on. Can't go until the poke's full."

Disgusted at Sam's cupidity and foolhardiness, the young man hobbled outside. He meant to take his own horse and leave. But he found that he had only an imperfect sense of direction. In that intense darkness he could only wander about aimlessly; the lightning flashes were not strong enough to reveal any distant landmarks. He might stumble into Santa Rosa or some other village. No; without Sam to guide him he was helpless.

So he went back inside the hut and listened to Slankard alternately gloat and curse. Sam complained bitterly because the hole was now full of water and it was no longer possible for him to reach the richest gravel with his shovel.

Hoping to hasten their departure, Gustin undertook to dig and transport the dirt while the other panned.

"Now you're talkin'," Sam approved. "You'll find my new hole right by the old one."

On one of his trips to the shrine the lightning revealed to him the still form of the Papago that had been killed. The Indian lay half buried in a pool and his mouth was open in a ghastly grin.

Gustin shuddered, veered aside. He wondered how long it would be until the dead man's relatives came looking for him.

THE poke was almost full. One more sackful of gravel, Sam said, and they would go.

After Gustin had flung down the spade for the last time he waited for another flash to afford him one final view of the Shrine of the Children, scene of his unique and terrible ordeal.

The flash came. It showed him the ancient spring bubbling high, a swift current flowing away toward the arroyo.

"Rats! The whole country looks like a spring now," Slankard scouted when he mentioned what he had seen. Gustin forbore to argue.

Five minutes later they were in their saddles and spurring their chilled, spiritless mounts into the arroyo, now a muddy torrent flecked with great islands of white foam.

"If your horse starts to swim, give him his head pretty much, but keep him guided toward the other side," Sam advised. "Be sure to keep that six-gun of yours out of the water. Gosh, but this poke's heavy! There never was such a pannin' made in one night."

But the stream was not so deep that the animals lost their footing. They scrambled up the opposite bank, and Sam led the way through a forest of low mesquites.

Soon they came to higher ground studded with saguaros, chollas, and Spanish daggers. As nearly as Gustin could judge, they were pointed northeast, though Tucson lay due east.

"Want to get up into the Silverbell Mountains, in case them rapscallions takes it into their heads to trail us," Sam explained. "Once in the hills, Fancy Ann'll keep 'em at their distance."

The rain slackened, ceased altogether. The moon peeped through a thinning canopy of cottony clouds. A ring of gray appeared in the east. The sun shot broad saffron ribbons through the mist that enveloped the desert.

About every little puddle was a troop of tiny croaking frogs. When Gustin expressed wonderment that they had survived so long in that normally waterless region, Slankard gravely averred that they had been rained down from the sky.

Before the advancing rays of the sun the mist was soon dispelled. The air became marvelously clear. Ahead of them scintillated the amethystine slopes of the Silverbells. To Gustin's Eastern eyes the mountains seemed within a stone's throw, but Sam declared that they were a good three hours' journey away.

"At that, we'll be through Sick Horse Pass by noon," he predicted. "Then they never will catch us."

As his sodden clothing dried, Gustin's spirits lightened. He was sore, tired, hungry, but cheerful withal. Their fantastic adventure was not to end in disaster.

He regretted Slankard's flouting of the

Indians' religion; but Sam was his friend, and his madness at the sight of gold could be excused since no real harm had been done. The Papagos would be glad to be rid of them; there was no actual danger of pursuit.

This latter opinion he voiced to Sam, who disagreed.

"Nope! If they can help it they never will let us get away to tell about that gold. I see it a whole lot clearer now than I did yesterday. They meant to dance us to death or, failin' that, to kill us some way or other so's their secret would be safe.

"Then the lightnin' scared 'em stiff and they forgot all about us. But they'll remember this mornin' and be right after us. 'Specially after they find that new hole we dug at their shrine."

HE was right. Before the sun was two hours high they perceived a party of horsemen on the far horizon, riding swiftly through the greasewood and cactus.

"Here's where we start to travel," Slankard cried. "These plugs ain't in the best of shape, but they ought to get us into the pass ahead of them Injun crow baits."

They plunged ahead at a swift gallop that told rapidly on their already weary horses, unfed since the night before. The day was hot, sultry, and the lathering sides of the animals heaved like bellows.

"Are you sure we're headed right?" Gustin called. "This doesn't look to me like much of a trail."

"Sure! I know this country like my mother knew her Bible."

The pursuers were gaining; there was no doubt that they were nearer. Gustin could even make out the colors of their shirts.

"Must have picked up fresh horses somewhere," Sam commented. "But if they come too close Fancy Ann'll have a thing or two to say."

At last, the mountains. The dim trail that they had been following led straight up the side of a black malpai peak.

Slankard pulled his sorrel to a stop amid the boulders strewn at the peak's base. A perplexed scowl was on his hawk-like face, now covered by a week's growth of iron-gray stubble.

He swung to the left. Gustin's suspicion that his guide was not as familiar as he claimed to be with the Silverbell range now became a certainty. But he followed; there was nothing else to do.

"Here's the cañon that'll take us up to the pass," Sam shouted as an opening in the lava yawned before them.

They clattered up a narrow defile where there was no sign of a trail. Gustin turned to look backward. The Papagos, some twenty of them, were just entering the cañon. A bullet whistled past.

"Let 'em shoot," Slankard scorned. "There never was an Injun yet that could hit the broad side of a barn with the door shut. What the——"

To the left, ahead, to the right, towered cliffs of solid stone, smooth as plastered walls, absolutely unscalable.

"We're in a box cañon," Slankard acknowledged soberly. "Ought to have turned to the right back there. Well, it's up to Fancy Ann now.

"Don't get scared, George. Remember, there never was an Injun that could shoot worth a hoot. And I'm the best shot on the border."

Gustin found a boulder big enough to shield both himself and his horse and began to look over his revolver.

"Hadn't we better surrender?" he suggested. "We can't hope to hold that party off long, and if we kill some of them it will go harder than ever with us when we're captured."

"No! Ain't no Papago goin' to lay his filthy paws on me long as I've got Fancy Ann."

The Indians halted two hundred yards down the cañon, found cover, and opened a brisk fire. Slankard sent a few warning shots in their direction.

"No use wastin' lead," he remarked. "Soon's they begin to show themselves Fancy Ann'll get in some of her deadly work."

A bullet whanged against the cliff behind them, ricocheted at a tangent, and

plowed its way through the prospector's stringy neck.

Gustin bounded across the intervening space to his fallen comrade. With eyes that were already glazing Slankard looked up at him bewilderedly.

"You were right, pardner," Gustin comforted, a sob choking his own voice. "There never was an Indian that could shoot. This is only an accident."

A silly, inconsequential thing to say at such a time, he reflected. But Sam Slankard never heard him. He was dead.

GUSTIN picked up Fancy Ann and, after debating with himself a moment, stuck his handkerchief into the muzzle. He waved this flag of truce above his head.

The firing ceased. He walked out into the open. Bartolo advanced to meet him. Without a word he handed over the rifle and revolver.

"I am sorry," he said then. "I tried to persuade my friend, who is now dead, not to desecrate your shrine; but he was mad with greed for gold. There, in the buckskin bag by his body, is the gold that he carried away."

"The spring is flowing," Bartolo replied in flat, hard, condemnatory tones.

"I noticed that before I left. But it will not flow long."

"It will keep on flowing forever and ever, until the sea covers all Papagueria. For the sacred Shrine of the Children has been violated by unholy hands and Iitoi is very angry. He demands a sacrifice."

"What kind of a sacrifice?"

"First, the lives of those who dug up that sacred soil like a cornfield, that they might steal the yellow stuff called gold. He has told us so through our medicine men. But Mad Dog is already dead, and I fear that Elder Brother will not be satisfied with only one of you. We did not shoot to hit, but meant to take both of you alive."

"Am I to be drowned in the spring like the children who were sacrificed there?"

"You will be placed in the spring and covered over with rocks, that you may not run away when Iitoi comes to take you to his home down in the earth."

By this time Bartolo's force had joined him. All the Papagos crowded around the still form of old Sam, sprawled across a scraggly brittle bush. Gustin turned his eyes from a circle of reddened sand.

A dozen yards away was a slight depression in the earth. This, he decided, would have to serve for a grave. He asked the Indians to help him move the corpse, but they only stared stonily. So he took hold of his dead partner's feet and dragged him to his shallow sepulcher.

He covered the body with a saddle blanket and piled boulders on top to forestall prowling coyotes. Then he quavered through one stanza of "Nearer My God to Thee," turned to his captors and signified that he was ready to accompany them to Santa Rosa.

IT was a long, hot ride back across that mesa. Almost exhausted when he started, Gustin was reeling in his saddle by the time they reached the village.

The Papagos rode in single file, half ahead of him and half behind. One of them led Sam's horse.

Bartolo skirted the north end of the settlement and crossed the arroyo, now a mere trickle. A great shout went up when they approached the Shrine of the Children. The whole tribe was gathered there, apparently had been waiting all day.

In the vanguard of those who rushed to meet them were Vicente and Alvaro. Vicente's eyes glowed with hate as they rested upon the prisoner.

Bartolo spoke in Papago, evidently giving an account of the pursuit and explaining the absence of Mad Dog. Vicente became intensely excited and launched into a prolonged discourse, making many gestures toward the shrine and toward Gustin. He referred frequently to Alvaro, who vigorously nodded and grunted his approval.

"Is the spring still flowing?" Gustin asked the chief.

"It is flowing more than it was this morning, and unless Iitoi is appeased it

will grow bigger and bigger until even the mountains are covered by the ocean. And the medicine men are sure that Elder Brother will not be satisfied with you alone. There must be another sacrifice of children—my children."

"Your children?"

"Only the children of a chief will do. My babies must be sent to the under world because two white men proved unworthy of the trust we placed in them. But first we shall see if Iitoi will not accept you and stop the spring."

At a signal from Bartolo, Gustin dismounted. A space just outside the shrine was cleared. Two women brought a long covered basket; the medicine men opened it and spread out various ceremonial objects, mostly rock crystals and clay images.

A tall Indian, stripped to the waist, shook a gourd rattle and began to sing in a queer monotone. Others danced around the prisoner.

Gustin slumped to the ground and sat in a stupor. His mind was inert; hope had utterly vanished. He thought dully of his mother, his father, his college friends safe and comfortable in their cozy homes and handsome offices so many thousands of miles away.

He had scorned all that as humdrum, futile, had struck out for the far places of the earth. Always, since a child, the red gods had called to him. He had heeded their call at the earliest opportunity, and this was the outcome. He wondered if his fate would ever be learned; or would the disappearance of himself and Sam remain an eternal mystery of the desert?

Something trickled down his neck. Vicente was sprinkling him with corn meal and intoning an invocation. Alvaro, leering evilly, motioned him to rise. He stumbled toward the gateway to the shrine.

Yes; the spring was indeed still running. Crystal clear water was gushing up and a stream perhaps a foot deep was rippling along a channel in which nuggets glinted brightly. Into this brooklet Vicente emptied Sam's poke while Alvaro rasped his prayer sticks.

Beside the spring stood Bartolo and his wife, the gloom of the grave on their set faces. Between them stood their children, naked and painted hideously, black in front and yellow behind.

The little ones, no doubt entirely ignorant of what was about to happen to them, smiled at him happily.

AN idea suddenly galvanized his torpid brain. A wild, crazy, foolish idea; yet it might be worth trying.

"Bartolo, my friend," he said clearly, 'have you ever been to the sea?"

"Many times, after salt."

"And have you ever tasted sea water?"

"Once. It is very salty."

"And you say that this is the ocean coming up here to flood the land of the Papagos?"

"Yes. For Iitoi is angry."

"It is not the ocean. This water is fresh. Iitoi is not angry but has sent a sweet spring, after the long drought, to irrigate the farms of his children."

An unbelieving, mocking laugh arose from the assembled Papagos. Vicente pushed Gustin toward the spring.

"Did I not save your children when the medicine man could not?" Gustin persisted. "If you will listen to me I will save them again. Taste that water."

Alvaro and Vicente shrieked their protests against any interruption of the sacrificial ceremony. But Bartolo agreed.

"I will taste it," he said. "I know that you lie, but I will taste it."

And Gustin, too, thought that he had lied. If this water came through an underground fissure from one of those old lake beds, temporarily refilled by the rain, it must certainly be salt. His training as a geologist told him that there was just one chance in a million that it was from some other source.

Bartolo threw himself upon the ground beside the spring. He touched his lips to the water, drew his mouth full. With cheeks distended he raised upon his hands, squinted speculatively at the sun. Again he lowered his head. He drank deeply.

More stories by Mr. Douglas in early issues.

The Barony of Whiskeag

By Holman Day

Author of "As Tested by Timmett Breed," "The Pied Pipess," Etc.

Being the engaging chronicle of a disastrous chapter in the history of the North Country.

SOMETHING astounding happened in Whiskeag.

An irruption of strangers from the outside world—pitching of tents—erection of derricks—herding of skilled workmen from far-off places—earth-jarring of rendrock in the ledgy cliffs!

And no questions answered when the goggling habitants of Whiskeag tried to find out what it was all about! Profane bosses ran the questioners off the lot!

Up till then everybody in Whiskeag had dated events from the fall of the meteor. It really seemed as if that meteor had used discretion and decency in landing on Whiskeag, choosing it as a point of contact with the earth. Outside of the middle of the Death Valley desert, the flaming visitor couldn't have picked an American target where possible damage to humans would have been less than in the middle of the six square miles of Whiskeag Township in the North Country.

Whiskeag never did have more than a straggling population. The folks who were obliged by circumstances to drift in and settle there had flopped down close to the township's border where they could cheer up a bit by looking into another town that had a little soil and less ledges.

Nobody ever found anything of the big meteor except a few small scattered fragments. The opinion was that the face of Whiskeag was so almighty tough that the main part of the meteor was bounced off again into the illimitable ether. But it surely had landed like the crack o' doom!

This subsequent happening, which put the shooting-star event out of folks' minds, was even more profoundly astonishing. Nobody had expected anything special to happen in Whiskeag, ever again. The big black-growth trees had been cut off years before. Most of the later hard growth had been turned into dowel stock. The

new pines and spruces were not big enough to bother with.

Therefore, nobody put up any objection when the run-down Yankee breed that was squeezed out of more industrious communities scuffed dispiritedly to the edge of the big woods and took up squatter patches in the township of Whiskeag.

They were the Boobeers, Tuttles and Yorks. The only cash they ever saw was what they got from down-country canneries for blueberries. They spent that promptly for sweets, fancy biscuits, tobacco and foolish gewgaws. The State's pauper agent was obliged to fid up through the winters for pork, beans, flour and other staples, not out of any patriarchal consideration for the Yorks, Tuttles, Bushees and Boobeers but because there was a State fund for such cases and the agent was able to pull a bit of graft for himself from purchases.

Dull, dreary, listless lives dragged on in Whiskeag. It was really one family; they had intermarried until it was all a compact mass of relationship; even a single outsider would have stirred up a little interest among them and given them something new to talk about. There was no item, even the most intimate, which they did not know about themselves.

And then all of a sudden this avalanche of strangers—this hoorah-ste-boy of industry—this mystery of what it was all about!

And this spending of money!

The Boobeers, et cetera, had only dim ideas about money in any amount above the change from a dollar bill.

Equally hazy were their notions about the need of accumulating a surplus, either of eatables or money.

ONE day, after the mysterious operations were in full swing, a bossy individual came striding over the ledges and marched around through the collection of shacks occupied by the Whiskeag clan.

He picked upon the most promising specimen of manhood in sight, Tuttle York; Whiskeag parents did not strain their intellects by thinking up original names; they merely shifted around the family appellations.

"Look a' here, do you and some of the able-bodied men here want to earn a little ready money?"

"Working—mebbe?"

"What the—of course, it's working!"

Mr. York took plenty of time whittling a sizable slice off a plug of tobacco. During this time most of the other men of his tribe collected around him.

It was a hot day in summer. Sweat was trickling down over the face of the active stranger who had come hustling on his business. The men of the tribe were not sweating; they displayed a sort of mystified sympathy when they surveyed this foolish fuss-about's perspiration.

"It'll have to depend consid'able on what the work is," stated York firmly, and grunts of his fellows corroborated his sentiments as standing for all.

"We're needing a whole lot of round stones from the size of an apple up to about the size of your heads—and that means a little bit bigger," explained the emissary, making no attempt to conceal sarcasm. "We'll furnish barrows. Stones are to be collected wherever they are—and wheeled in and dumped on one big pile."

Mr. York made no inquiry about the pay proposed for such service; the matter of money did not seem to interest him in the slightest degree. He wagged his jaws and basked in the sunshine with the air of one who found the peace of the present discounting all promise of prospects.

"There's only one kind of picking up we're interested in, mister. It's a kind of a perfession for us—and we'll stick to it."

"What kind of picking is that?"

"Bloob'ries! Picking bloob'ries, mister!"

"But, blast it, the blueberries are all green now! You can't pick 'em!"

"Oh, they'll be a-ripening off in a few weeks."

"Are you going to turn down a chance to work while they're ripening?"

"Ain't *going* to—have already *done* it," declared Mr. York with an important,

businesslike snap which was also indorsed by grunts from the others. "Nobody don't git nowhere by giving up a reg'lar perfession and dabbling into fly-by-night jobs that come along. And we don't know as yit what we'd be picking up them rocks for!"

In his eyes was a gleam of the curiosity that had been baffled till then by the peremptory methods of the boss' when questions had been asked. "We wouldn't want to git into nothing without a full understanding of what it's all about!"

The stranger cursed and started away; he turned at a little distance. "You damnation mud turtles, I thought I was doing you a kindness! Our own crowd can pick up those rocks.

"Want to know what they'll be used for, hey? For ammunition when your gang is run off'm this township! You're all going to be put off! Didn't know that, did you?"

"Nobody can't do nothing of that sort 'thout law," came back Mr. Tuttle stoutly. "We're squatters—have been so here and other places—and we know all about the law. It has chased us enough, I'll say!"

"All right! Then you'll only be meeting an old friend when the law comes around here and boosts you off. It's coming! And now that you can't be used in some honest work, the law will come a dam' sight sooner than was planned on!" He strode on his way.

MR. YORK and his clansmen were unimpressed. Their spokesman drawled, listening to the clack of the stranger's hobnailed shoes on the distant ledges:

"There's jest about as much sense in him as there was in that cussed shooting star—on the dead go, and what's it amount to in the end? That star didn't crack nothing but itself. They can't be no dents put in Whiskeag or into the folks that live here!"

At that moment a blast of rendrock shook the ground.

One of the clan spoke up: "Wa-a-all, times change, so they say. That bang must have left a dent. And the critter seemed to be pretty certain when he made his threat. What in cussnation is this high-Betty-Martin-tiptoe stuff all about, anyway?"

"Better let time tell," advised Mr. York languidly. "What's the use of our tuckering ourselves all out with talk when time is bound to tell, as it always does?"

He pulled his hat down over his eyes and leaned back against the wall of his tarpaper shack.

"I suppose somebody is paying 'em for making such fools of themselves out in this blistering sun," averred Boobeer York, plucking the handy plug of tobacco from the yawed side pocket of Tuttle York's jacket, taking care not to let the lender become aware of the loan. He replaced the plug carefully after gnawing off a chew.

"They tell me there are critters in the world outside who have so much spare money they don't know what to do with it. Somebody must have told somebody else, of the kind I'm speaking of, about where money can be spent for doing the most of nothing in any place in the world. That's Whiskeag!

"If there was any use o' spending money here I'd have a brick chimbly and use clapboards 'stead o' tar paper on my house. But I know too much! Hows'ever, there's al'ays plenty of fools. And I s'pose time will come round later and tell us who this spender is who's so loose with his money —and what it's all about!"

II.

IN order to anticipate time, which is often aggravatingly leisurely about telling, and in order to get a clew to the meteor-rivaling upheaval in Whiskeag, it becomes necessary to jump from primitive Whiskeag, smack! into a palatial suite in the Hotel Cecil in London.

J. Porter Brown—formerly and better known in New York as "Shake-'em-up Joe"—paunchy, florid, middle-aged and touched up as to topknot in order to bridge partially the age difference between him and a new, young wife of the tinted-by-hand type—this Mr. Brown read aloud a

cablegram from his New York agent. The gist of this report was that, according to orders, the agent had bought a township far upcountry, remote from all railroads, with rugged scenery.

Mrs. Brown had seen a castle in Scotland and had stipulated expressly in regard to the rugged scenery—as she had commanded in all other respects regarding the purchase, the buildings and the scheme of the thing generally. It was all her plan.

The agent did not go into details. With sudden, new opulence tumbling in on him and contemplating other swelling surges in sight and sweeping on, Mr. Brown was serenely taking the dollar duckings and was not bothering any more about the details of round sums charged up to him.

The agent, helped by a tricky lawyer in the State where Whiskeag had long languished as worthless, had driven a shrewd trade, what with despondent heirs and defaulted titles. He merely multiplied the sums he paid by five—and that was kindly service to Mr. Brown because the latter was no longer valuing anything in the world unless he paid a big price for it. And when his young, new wife asked for anything, as in this case, he fairly fought for a chance to pay the biggest price.

Curiously enough, he was sharing, in his own way, with the Tuttles, the Boobeers and the Yorks, an utter disregard for money. The trait scarcely constitutes a bond, to be sure, but it does serve to link Whiskeag and the Hotel Cecil after a fashion.

Where Mr. Brown was concerned it was in her favor that Mrs. Brown had kicked conventions on her slipper toe in the chorus of a musical comedy. He considered that getting her all to himself was a stroke of excellent fortune. And fortune did do it for him—after the young lady had made sure of how much of a fortune he had in his mitt—not losing sight of what was coming!

Mr. Brown, never having had anything at all to do with society, except that he had stood ace high as a mixer and on terms of considerable palship with important male New Yorkers when he was head bartender of an exclusive hotel, stupidly wondered how it was that Mrs. Brown was able to get nowhere with the feminine high-uppers—having all the money and clothes she could ask for.

She did her best. It wasn't so much an ambition to improve her general status of mind and arrive at excellence in social standing as it was a hungry hankering to show off her clothes and jewels among the best of 'em.

She had a hard-boiled show-girl's secret contempt for the actual personalities in society. She called them homely dubs. But after being admired so much in public, on the stage, she was not able to content herself by parading up and down in front of a mirror all by her lonesome!

One of her feminine friends, equally nard boiled, dared to put the thing straight to Mrs. Brown after listening to laments. "Lammit, Modeste, if one o' them Black Handers heaved a lighted bomb into society and you offered to risk your life by rushing in and lugging it out into the street, you wouldn't be let into real society. You'll never walk in through the front door. And them high-toners keep their windows well locked these days. You've got to pinch your nose, duck under, and come up into the real swim out of another puddle."

"How—where?"

"Don't ask me, dearie! If I knew I'd sell the idea. There's plenty o' loose money waiting for it these days."

IT looked tough for Mrs. Brown, and she said so. She was not endowed with an especially deep intellect; thought of any protracted nature made her head ache.

Not a single idea came to her in New York. But she was keen on the matter of tips and hunches, and desperate desire whetted her perceptions.

Furthermore, looking back across the ocean from England, her perspective broadened. And in Scotland she saw the ancient castle. It served as a tip and she played her hunch.

Mr. Brown's business took him to Scotland. He was not abroad for his health nor for a honeymoon nor to look at any of the old things. He was not even particular about the age of the whisky for which he contracted. He figured it would be a fortnight old, at any rate, by the time it arrived off the New Jersey coast.

His narrow mental capacity was jammed solidly full of his plans for making money; he allowed Mrs. Brown to do the thinking on how to spend the money.

Accepting her dictum as to all details, as to what she intended to do for herself, he learned some interesting things about certain plans for his own future. She did not mention her hard-boiled adviser's metaphor of the new puddle, but it stuck in her mind. She was building on the idea.

Mr. Brown discovered that as lord of the new manor he would be known as Porter van Barown. It was not an especially severe disjointing of his real name —only an "a" stuck in where it would do a lot of good; and it had a suggestion, the new name, of baron. As to the Van, he reflected that Mrs. Brown's father was a furniture mover; he kept his thoughts to himself and did not joke on the point. Mrs. Brown's state of mind made humor dangerous.

So, that's how Whiskeag got mixed up with shooting stars—meteoric and human!

The way Mrs. Brown figured—and in her desperate hopefulness she was not too particular about plus and minus—the thing could be worked out.

Her experience in the hectic life had convinced her of one fact—she had made it her cardinal principle: "They all fall for fun—even the best of 'em!"

Particularizing on the barony project, she said to Mr. Brown: "They'll come across for a good time! I'm in the know on that point, all right. And this'll be a case where they don't have to dig for coin —only swap goods for goods.

"You stood in all right with a lot of big men, didn't you, when they were leaning on the bar? Well, there'll be better'n a bar in the new castle! And no cash register ringing! And as for the shooting —there'll be everything from craps to elephants. We'll have the woods full of animals and all fenced in.

"And after the wow we give the men, first time up, there'll be ladies next time, a few of them, anyway! Advertising pays! And the women who won't fall for a peek at what their husbands talk so much about will be too queer for me to mix with, anyway. Yes, sir! As soon as they're here, let me at 'em! That's all! They'll simply have to be decent to me afterward when I'm in N' Yawk."

Mr. Brown agreed and praised his wife's headwork.

She went along with him on another trip to Scotland. She wanted to study that castle again, not merely the structure but all the outside adjuncts.

It happened that the lord of the castle came home from somewhere on the day when she was inspecting, on the outside. She was much impressed by the actions of the villagers, who hustled out of the thatched cottages and cheered and flung their caps in the air.

Mr. Brown was not with her. He was about something important in his particular line.

THAT evening she described rapturously the loyal fervor of the shouting villagers and their groveling delight when the lord of the castle flung to them a purse of coin and graciously told them to go and make merry.

"It was just like a scene on the stage, Van!" She was getting used to the new cognomen by daily practice on it. "Over across we've got 'em skun seven ways on coin and high buildings but over here they can certainly pass us the cream tart when it comes to getting respect from the understrappers. What is there in the way of a village on our estate?"

"Cursed if I know, dear! I'm leaving it all to my agent. But I guess there ain't any! There can't be! I own it all."

"I'll have a village," she declared. "It belongs in the act! There'll be a kick in the thing when they cheer and throw their

caps. You and I know N' Yawkers! They fall for stuff like that.

"It'll boost us in their minds—it can't help it! You'll make a hit, Van, when you throw a purse of coin and tell your villagers to make merry."

Mr. Brown could see himself in the part and liked the idea.

"I'll cable to have a village," he proffered.

"Nothing doing till I get there and pick the cast of the villagers. The act needs the right types. Thank Gawd, I understand the show business!

"I won't even take a chance on having the cottages built till I can boss the job. I'm my own scenic artist in this thing—studying abroad," she said pridefully. "I'll rehearse and put on my own show. It'll be classy stuff for 'em to take back to N' Yawk and talk about. Wot-o, old dear?"

"Wot-o it is!" returned Mr. Brown blithely.

III.

THE Van Barowns rode forth from the courtyard of their towered castle of stone. The high wall of the yard was pierced by a broad, arched way from which a short bridge led across a moat. The architect had included even a moat. Mrs. Barown had been insistent on that point, per cable.

The lord and lady of the manor were on horseback. She wore a velvet habit, a broad-brimmed hat with a drooping plume. She was theatrically living up to her part, in the right togs, as her stage knowledge prompted selection.

In the company of a lady thus medievally attired Mr. Barown was a rather jarring modern note in his breeches and boots. But though Mrs. Barown presumed on his generosity in all matters she shrewdly drew the line on a suggestion of hose, doublet and plumed cap.

It was really their first tour of inspection, going any distance afield.

Money and hustle had done a lot—they were agreed on that. Mr. Barown was willing to admit that the castles abroad were older, if that was anything to their credit, but only in America, he insisted, could a castle of really up-to-date quality be rushed to a finish and equipped in record time.

"But we mustn't brag about that part," she said testily. "Let the N' Yawkers think it's old."

At that Mr. Barown showed some of his American spirit. "Over here we brag about how new our houses are and how old our liquor is. I can do both and I'm going to do it!"

Mr. Barown had transported legally and safely his aged and private stock, under due permit.

"You won't have much breath left to brag about the house after you've got done talking about the liquor," was her resigned comment.

She was entirely ready to relinquish argument on the topic, having a matter of more importance on her mind. She was afield on a quest for loyal villagers; the barony lacked still its chief adjunct, as she viewed the thing from a dramatic standpoint.

Regarding the Boobeers and Tuttles and Yorks she had been informed by the disgusted steward of the estate. She had sounded him respecting a supply of retainers.

"I'm advising you against trying to make pets of that tribe, ma'am. If I get you right as to what you want you won't be either pleased or proud when you show 'em off! About all they can do is to draw flies—and the critters are even too lazy to brush the flies away!

"We have run 'em off the township, over the line, and have burned down the shacks. The law let us do it. If you'll give the word I'll get some more law that will drive 'em farther away."

But Mrs. Barown was not taking any prosaic steward's word on the matter of casting types for her proposed drama—and said as much with some tartness.

"But they've been sneaking in nights and stealing game from the preserves, ma'am. They're slyer than foxes! And they've been dipping in the fish ponds—

I'm sure of that! They're fatting up on the pheasants and trout."

"I'm not surprised, Boxton. Being thrown off, as they've been, they've taken a grudge against the estate. As soon as they've been made our loyal villagers they'll put our interests first and they'll even keep all other poachers away. It will be good business to bring them back and make them loyal." She eagerly appealed to Mr. van Barown on that point, anxious to show that she had a business head of her own.

He admitted that she was probably right. "At any rate, we'll give 'em the once-over, dearie! I guess you know your card when it comes to picking actors!"

THEREFORE, faring across the border, the lord and lady of the new barony adventured into the settlement of the transplanted clan. The visitors were not acclaimed. Judged by expressions, the men, women and children were more inclined to throw rocks than caps.

"It's a bum outfit! I ain't sold on it!" muttered Mr. van Barown, after a few moments of apprehensive inspection.

"But the rawer the material is, the more fun I'll get out of shaping it up!"

"Better wire a N' Yawk booking agency and have 'em send along something nearer up to snuff in the way of villagers."

"And get a bunch of wise-crackers who'd blackmail us or spill the limas all over the lot! Nothing doing, Van! I'm starting with the real, down-to-the-ground people if I take these on. And I'll have 'em eating out of my hand, all right enough!"

She halted her horse on a little knoll and found herself surrounded by an audience. She felt entirely at home before an audience of any sort. In less than five minutes of snappy talking she had told them what was wanted of them, what would be provided for them and what would happen if they failed to come across as their part of the performance.

They listened attentively; as usual they left the talking to Tuttle York. He concealed all emotion; he had animal cunning rather than brains; he never allowed himself to be swept away by any gust of thought.

He whittled off a slice of tobacco, stuck it into his mouth and munched placidly.

Mr. York had never visited a city, nor had he ever heard much about one. But from what little he had seen of city folks who came into the woods to fish or hunt or rusticate he had a rooted conviction that all of them were a little off in their wits. His mental attitude toward them was of the patronizing sort. He felt that all lunatics ought to be humored in their whims.

This young woman, with painted face and carmined lips and tously blond hair and gewgawed up in such an outlandish rig, and who asked the Boobeers, Tuttles and Yorks to come and live free of all charge in all houses with straw for roofs and flock up to the big house on stated occasions and give three cheers and throw their caps—caps to be furnished along with what she called smocks—this young woman certainly deserved to be pitied and humored. But Mr. York's natural conservatism kept him from jumping the way of his sympathies in too sudden fashion.

WE thank you for the invite," he admitted. "But it'll be quite a change from our way of living, all free and independent, as you might say, and never cheering nobody nor nothing till the spirit moves us. It might be sometimes onconvenient for us to drop everything when that belfry bell of yours rings for us to come and cheer."

She showed temper. She had expected this miserable herd, not waiting for any rehearsal, to cheer her speech wildly and thankfully—not understanding the natures which persist in rock-ribbed Yankees, no matter how much fate and ill fortune have slammed them. "Where's your gratitude for such a handsome offer?"

"I'm sort o' chawing on it, like a steer does on his cud," stated Mr. York, suiting his words with his wagging jaws. "You got anything else to offer more'n you've spoke of a'ready?"

Mr. Barown had surrendered much of

his self to his new wife but he had reserved the right to resent too much rubbing in by any third parties. Furthermore, the warning of his first hunch was still persisting in him. "Say, you low-down bums!"

He was halted right there by a yelp from his wife. Then out of the corner of her mouth, sotto voce, she demanded: "How do you expect to get on with your lord-of-the-manor stuff, Van, making a crack like an East Side bartender fanning with a bung starter? This is all new to these poor jaspers! I've got to humor them a little."

With the mutual spirit of forbearance existing in the two who were doing the talking, each one dealing patronizingly with the other, the lady and Mr. York finally came to more or less of an understanding. He even admitted, under her persistent questioning, that a proper amount of generosity applied to the situation might stir up a spirit of real loyalty in those who would become the villagers on the estate.

"We're slow to make chums of outsiders, marm, but this thing you're talking about is a new slarnt and it may work out fine and to the queen's taste—you never can tell. We ain't going to jump all in a minuit, like as if we never had no chance at nothing before. We'll take our time here to talk it over and you might ride down to-morrer and git the verdict.

"What I want to ask right now is: is any more stone houses going to be built? We got an offer to pick up stones, but we had to turn it down."

"Your cottages must be built, of course!" Her suggestive silence after that remark gave them an opportunity to volunteer. But there was no reaction. They merely blinked at her with expressions characteristic of drowsy cats.

Mr. van Barown growled deeply in his throat, sounding like a muted coffee grinder. The lady of the manor took no chances on another outburst from him. She wheeled her horse and departed, calling back, "I'll come to-morrow for your word."

WHEN her husband caught up with her, after a painful trot, he announced himself. "I'm playing my hunch in this thing! The scheme is scratched! See?"

"They wouldn't know how to build the cottages, anyway," she argued. "After spending all you have dumped in here you're not snapping the rubber band on the roll, are you, when it's only shooting for dimes instead of dollars?"

"It ain't the money! Dip all you want to! But don't spend it on buying trouble. That's my hunch!"

"And you're only stacking your little squeegee of a quick grudge against my big plan! I've found my material here and I'm going to use it. I know how. You'll leave it to me—and that's settled!"

On his own part, Mr. Tuttle York was up against opposition, too. He listened to a medley of objections, and squelched them all.

"I don't want to hear no more about not going to live in stone dog houses with straw roofs. I don't want no more houts about throwing caps. We ain't paying for the caps.

"And as for three cheers when we're called on! You ain't going to begretch the air you use in them cheers, be you? I'm going to tell her to-morrer that we're signing on for the job. I'd 'a' told her to-day but onless you make city folks jump high a few times to grab an apple off'm the tree, they don't think they're gitting much."

Then he softened his aspect. Like a man who felt that affluence was on the way and no longer considered the necessity of prudent thrift, he allowed his plug of tobacco to go the rounds and loftily waved aside the nubbin which York Boobeer proffered as salvage.

"Now, gents and all, I see as how I've got to do the thinking for you as well as the talking," proceeded Mr. York. "We've never till now been able to see no great prospects ahead of us in Whiskeag, outside o' bloob'ries. No big fact'ry or business was like to settle in these parts—and I d'no's we'd relish being tied down to fact'ry work, anyway. Prob'ly not!

"But here's a nice little business as has come to us. We want to make up our minds to tend to it and run it just as shrewd and careful as we can. Let our motto be 'Our Business is Barown.' Of course, it will mean doing a lot of things it ain't in our reel nature to do, but let's go to it with cheerfulness and gumption."

"Meaning by that we're going to pick up stones for them houses?" queried Boobeer Tuttle, squinting in hostile fashion.

"You didn't hear me offer to, did you? What's more, if she says anything about it to-morrer I'll put my foot down solid. Didn't you see as how I had the upper hands of her all the way along?

"The way to do is to keep on that same way. Never let city folks trodge on you—they don't think nothing of you afterward. In all other ways we'll humor her and him. We reely ought to do it with folks that's so plumb skeedoozled in their intellecks.

"And the principal thing is," concluded Mr. York, tapping his finger into his palm with monitory gesture, "now that the 'foresaid business is settled down here in town we want to take mighty good pains to keep it here. I donno who these folks be or where they've come from—but we want to be up and coming so's they won't git away. Always, 'Our Business is Barown!' Don't forgit it!"

IV.

EVENTUALLY Boobeer Tuttle confided to Tuttle York a conviction that the lord of the manor held a grouch against the villagers.

The affirmant had taken plenty of time to arrive at a conclusion; it was the principle of the members of the clan to take plenty of time about everything—including mental operations.

Mr. Tuttle did not proclaim his sentiments until the villagers had been settled for some little time in the new cottages. "I'm ready and willing to do my part, jest as Marm Corn-tossel-top has been training us to do it. But I'll be cussed if I can put any gre't amount of feeling into three cheers onless Barown shifts that look of his into something more sort o' sooavable."

"Your feelings ain't got nothing to do with it," he was reminded sternly by Mr. York. "This is business, not fun, that we're tending to. Marm Corn-tossel-top says we're coming along well—and she's the one to be suited. She's the boss of the coop, ain't she?"

"As a free American citizen I don't like to meech and wag a tail and take no sech looks from nobody," persistently grumbled the rebel. "Be you, yourself, going to stand everything?"

"Ab-sol-oot!" declared Mr. York. "Allus keep in mind our motto: 'Our business is Barown.'"

"But he can't hold in that grudge of his much longer—old Barown can't! It's coming! I can see it in his eye. All is, I hope he picks on you—you seem to be so blast-fired sure of holding in your temper."

Mr. York, for strictly business purposes, was concealing certain suspicions of his own regarding the state of mind in the lord of the manor.

From the old bartender days into these new ones Mr. van Barown had carried an ability to scarify the souls and rip the sensibilities of bums by a look without words.

Despite the bland self-sufficiency which is so often a corollary of stupid ignorance, the leader of the clan had writhed inwardly under the threat of that bartender stare, without realizing just what was the matter with him. Now, after what Boobeer Tuttle had said, Mr. Tuttle York carried to the rehearsal of that day and date a feeling made up of trepidation and of a developing grudge of his own.

Barown, to be sure, was a business—and business is always business, but Mr. York had ideas of his own about being "trodged" on too much.

ON that day the lord of the manor was called for a final rehearsal by the lady who was staging the affair. The day of the opening of the piece was near at hand. Invitations sent to a selected coterie of good sports had been accepted with en-

thusiastic promptness—perfectly wonderful letters, Mrs. Barown had called them. And not one of the gentlemen had failed to put the extra "a" into the name, though they addressed him in the epistles as "Dear Joe."

"They're wise ones and the kind who know their card," stated the lady.

Then she gave her husband a net sack heavy with metal disks. They were lead dress weights from her seamstress' stock. Up to date Mr. Barown had not practiced with the purse throwing.

"It's only two days now, Van, and I want you to do it all nice and graceful, just as if it was a regular thing. And be careless—kind of lordly, of course! Just offhand! For the love o' sweet Cicely, don't act as if you was aiming at a mark—and don't watch to see where it lands. Heave it and swing around as if it was only a trifle. And it will be!"

She giggled. "I've made 'em understand it's to be only a 'prop' purse, even in the real show. But that he-head one had the impudence to tell me they'd cheer better if we used silver dollars. And I don't know," she mused, "but what for the first show we put on it would be a nice idea to use the real coin. They'll be——"

But the oaths which Mr. van Barown extricated from his system, after certain baleful chokings, stopped her right there! He told her what the Boobeers and Tuttles and Yorks would be, as well as where they'd be, before he'd toss 'em as much as a bunged nickel.

"I'm already feeding and housing that damnation tribe of sleeping Sams and Susies—and I'm still playing my hunch. Don't push me too far, dammit—I mean dearie! You're devilish lucky to get me to agree to even heave this sack of lead. I wish it was heavier. I'd like to be throwing a meal bag full of crowbars."

And in that mood, with a mien of ferocity to accord, the lord of the manor went forth to confront from the castle steps his assembled loyal villagers.

Mr. York, doing his best as cheer leader in the greeting huzzas, had hard work to come up to the spirit of his rôle. If ever he beheld contemplated murder in the countenance of a human being, it was there on the face of Mr. van Barown.

The lady director was obliged to cue her leading man several times before Mr. van Barown was able to control his voice or remember his speech. Then he began to whirl the purse around and around his head.

"Rotten!" she protested. "This ain't a hammer-throwing contest!"

But he was too much occupied with thought as to his lines to mind her. He snarled: "Thank you, my good and loyal villagers. Here is a trifle with which to make merry!"

He loosed his clutch on the sack. It was a slingshot—a savage missile. He was disobeying all of his lady's injunctions at that moment. He malevolently aimed at Tuttle York, who was standing out alone at the van of the throng—and was pleased to note that the bung-starter practice of his youthful bartender days had served to insure proficiency in these later years; and venom helped the aim; he had found Mr. York expressing too much of his real feelings by the look he had returned in reply to the one given him by Mr. van Barown.

COINCIDENT with the word "merry" the hurtling purse caught Mr. York squarely in one eye and felled him.

The lord of the manor, remembering stage directions now, when satisfaction had smoothed his troubled thoughts, whirled on his heel and reëntered the castle. The lady remained to mediate.

She hurried down the steps to the side of Mr. York who was on his knees with his hand over his eye.

"It's too bad! Of course, it was an accident. I hope it didn't hurt you much."

"A accident, hey? That's a dam' perlite word for what was done a-puppus."

"How do you dare to swear in my presence, you low-down rat?" she shrilled, having a ready temper of her own when she willed to use it.

"I dast to do most anything, after that!" stated Mr. York, struggling up and

testing his eye to determine whether anything was left of it.

Boobeer Tuttle felt called on to put in some testimony. He had just got started in rasping denunciation when Mr. York slapped him across the mouth and silenced him.

By that stroke the leader satisfied his desire to hit somebody at the moment and at the same time did something in the way of adhering to the motto: "Our Business is Barown." It would distinctly hurt that business if the lady and her husband were to hear what their loyal villagers really thought of them.

Perceiving an opportunity to cash in on misadventure, Mr. York got promptly onto his job. "I've been seeing as how we ain't any of us pop'lar with the high muckamuck, marm. 'Specially me! But I didn't think it was ever coming to a p'int where he would set out to kill me dead in my tracks.

"I ain't going to take no more chances—and the rest ain't. I've been having a hard job of it, holding 'em in line."

"After all that has been done by us for you folks, you're loyal villagers, I'll say not!" she taunted ragefully. "What do you mean—taking no more chances?"

"We're quitting!"

Mr. van Barown reappeared on the castle steps—his entrance uncued by the stage manageress. "You're a whole lap behind in quitting, you infernal mud turtle! You quit five minutes ago. You're all fired. Get off my lands before I pep you up with bird shot!"

He had brought a double-barreled gun from his stock and patted its lock with meaning.

"If you didn't have that gun I'd give you two black eyes in pay for this one," yelled Mr. York, jumping up and down with the ire of a little mind.

But with two men making fools of themselves, Mrs. Barown steadied her thoughts and met the emergency. "Keep still; the both of you. I have been running this thing and I'll keep on running it."

"I ain't got no fault to find with you, marm," acknowledged the leader, still on the business tack and partly mollified by finding his eye still in place.

"Now if I tell you," proceeded the lady, working briskly in the crisis, "that when Mr. van Barown tosses the purse at the real reception, day after to-morrow, it will be filled with silver dollars and will be tossed gently, like this," she made a dramatic gesture, "what do you say? Like loyal villagers! Remember my training, now!"

Mr. York meditatively took counsel with himself and exchanged glances with his fellows. It was mutual assurance that business was boss.

Then, despite the fact that the lord of the manor still clutched the shotgun and was plainly much wrought up by the promise the lady had made to cross those itching palms with silver, Mr. York called for cheers and flung up his cap.

It came hard, he admitted it later on the return of the loyal villagers to their cottages. "But if you take up with a business motto," he averred, "it better be stuck to. Like we've stuck to bloob'ries till this other business come along. We'll keep our minds right onto the main p'int. And silver dollars will be in that puss, day after to-morrer. I reckon I reelly done a good stroke of business by gitting into the way of that thing Barown throwed."

He became rather oracular. He bored Boobeer Tuttle with uncompromising stare from the hale eye.

"I want you all should keep your tongues where they belong after this and let me do the whole o' the thinking and talking for you, as I've allus done in the past. Look what I've jest done to-day! Arranged it round so't we'll have silver dollars throwed to us! It takes thinking to manage them business strokes."

Mr. York seemed to be in a very complacent mood regarding that thinking of his!

V.

BEFORE that day closed Mr. van Barown found his own thinking a torturous affair after he had used in urgent pleas all the words of his limited vocabu-

lary. His words had been of no avail; his subsequent thinking seemed to produce nothing profitable.

Four men had appeared to him in his castle of stone. He pondered regretfully on the limitations of being a landed baron in America. The boys of the old days, so he had learned abroad, when bothersome strangers appeared, merely called on retainers to flip up the drawbridge or to throw intruders into the moat.

Each of these men tipped a coat lapel and showed him an official badge of the Federal government.

But they were not there to arrest Mr. Barown; they assured him politely on that point. In fact, they were wholly and suavely perfect gentlemen in the affair.

However, they did invite Mr. Barown to go somewhere with them. Before a certain court of inquiry, in short! Matters relative to a purported syndicate of alleged rum-running high-uppers—a gilt-edged crowd—those matters were in process of investigation, so Mr. Barown was informed quite in a confidential way. The visitors blandly expressed an opinion that some investigator had an idea that Mr. Barown might be able to throw his special ray of light on conditions.

"I don't know a thing about it," the landed baron of Whiskeag insisted over and over.

"Probably not," purred the spokesman of the four. "But you'll have to go and tell 'em so. Here's the summons. It isn't our job to take evidence."

Mr. Barown allowed himself to flame a little at one point in the colloquy. He said he didn't like the looks of sending four men—four, count 'em—as if he were some desperate crook.

The spokesman grinned cordially and flapped a gesture to indicate the strength of the castle. "We got a queer steer about this place when we were down country. It was said you'd built a fort up here and had drilled your own army and stood ready to run the law off the lot, wheelbarrow fashion."

"That's a nice report for me to be plastered with," complained the owner with ire. "And I'll bet it'll be held against me, no matter what I say or whatever happens."

"Don't be worried, sir. The place does look like a fort. But our report will tell the true story. We can assure the investigators that we were used very well here—and that you were perfectly willing to go along to Washington with us."

"I'll be cussed if I'm willing!" stormed the cornered gentleman. "I've told you about that crowd of big boys I'm expecting. I've got to be here to do the honors. I can't go into explanations of what's back of it—but it comes nigh to being the most important thing in my life—this party I'm going to give."

"It's too bad to have the United States government thinking the same way about its own little party that's on the docket—but we've told you how the matter stands, sir. And, of course, there's no room for argument about which party is biggest and has first call."

However, Mr. Barown did stubbornly argue; and he pleaded, too. But they merely went around the circle with him and came ruthlessly back to the same place: he must go along with them to Washington.

He was allowed only one concession—and he was compelled to purchase that much by granting a favor whose allurement the Federal gentlemen could not resist. They were given guns and fishing rods and allowed to go out into the preserves after fish and birds. On his part, Mr. Barown was permitted to remain at his castle for one more night, to make his arrangements for leaving. Before the four would agree to leave him unguarded he gave his word of honor that he would go along with them the next day, starting at dawn.

HE was doing his torturous thinking, in agonized solitariness, when the perturbed lady of the manor burst in on him.

"Who were those men, Van?"

He told her.

"What do they want of you?"

He told her.

"Are you going to let those two-dollar-a-day dicks interfere with my social arrangements?"

He saw no other way out of the scrape—and he told her that, also, but he did some expert and extremely emphatic cursing which gratified her.

However, at the end of the anathema, he came around again to the doleful conclusion that the social party would have to be called off.

"It can't be called off," she squealed, beating her fists against him. "The sports must have started from N' Yawk by this time. It isn't going to be called off, either. Beat it out into your estate! Take to the sticks, Van! Leave 'em guessing."

"I've given in my word of honor that I'll go with 'em first thing in the morning."

The mention of ethics would have sorely puzzled the lady; she was equally confounded by Barown's remarkable attitude in this matter—an attitude for which she had no name.

"Who are you trying to suit in this thing—those four bum bulls or me and the real goods who're coming? Your word has also gone in to the sports, and first, hasn't it?"

"I know—but this latest is the government," he faltered.

"A lot of regard you've been giving the old government till this floozy flop of yours, all at once!" she twitted. "Van, you've busted a gear in you somewhere, all of a sudden. Where've your wits gone? How much change did you offer 'em?"

"Not a cent! Of course not! They ain't that kind. I can size men!"

"Yes! I'm right! Some of the works have been shook out of you, somehow," she declared ic. looking him up and down with scorn. "Why didn't you call me in to handle 'em?"

"Look here. You keep out of this. It's a man's matter."

"I see it is. But I don't see any real man handling it. Come on! I'll tuck you into bed, sonny. You ought to get a good sleepy-sleep! It'll be a long ride to-morrow on the choo-choo cars."

He escaped from her, stamping out, muttering.

In the desperate emergency Mrs. Barown tried to think and, as usual, failed to accomplish anything by thinking.

She hunted up the steward and asked for help. But the factotum only wagged his head helplessly and maundered something about everybody having to obey the law.

She tried to get at her husband again, but that apprehensive gentleman, mindful of how she had wrought always upon him in the past, had taken the precaution to lock himself in his spacious den and, when she persisted at the door, he shouted that he was muffling his ears so that he might not give in to her orders and arguments.

Then in the stress of her emotions she went hurrying out of doors, trying to get some inspiration from the open. She beheld the den which had been built for half a dozen black bears included in the Barown zoo. And she also met up with Mr. Tuttle York, who was out for a stroll.

DID you see four men go walking away from the castle?" she demanded.

"Yes, marm! They went that way." He flapped a lazy gesture.

"You hustle now and let those bears out and head 'em away toward those men."

It was Mr. York's inquisitive nature to ask for whys and wherefores before he acted.

She broke in on his questions. "I want those bears to eat up those four men."

"Wa-a-all, marm, I'm jedging as how you reelly would, if looks speak for anything. But them is only tame bears and they wouldn't eat a man onless he laid down and let 'em chaw after he had daubed plenty of merlasses onto himself. Them four men all had guns—and the bears would be the ones who would git et."

"Oh, what shall I do to get rid of those devils?" she lamented.

"Who be they?"

"Law officers."

He showed spirit of his own.

"In that case I don't like 'em, either!

Me and my folks has been houted from pillar to post all our lives by law officers. They're all of 'em mean critters—and I wish them bears reelly was savage," he declared venomously.

The lady brightened. "Get your crowd together, York, and take your pick of what you find in the gun room. Run those law rats off our land."

But Mr. York displayed no more of his gratifying alacrity. In fact, he shook his head.

"There isn't real loyal-villager spirit in you any more than there is in those rabbits over there," she flared.

"Nothing was said to us about any job except to give three cheers and throw caps. That's doing as much loyalling as we cal'late on!"

"Well, you'll never have a chance to do that any more. Those law officers are going to take my husband away. They're playing a trick on him. I don't believe they'll let him come back here."

Mr. York's features sagged into an expression like that of a stricken hound. "Do you mean to tell me that our business—I mean are you saying that this place of yourn will have to be shet down?"

"Of course it will, if they take away Mr. Barown."

At that moment, two elements, harmless enough in themselves but potent for mischief in conjunction, were approaching the point of mingling. Vapid woman, brainless man. Her intent was concerned wholly with her grand scheme of social climbing; he beheld only the disheartening prospect of a turning to the wall of that comforting motto: "Our Business is Barown."

Mingled emotions flamed in Tuttle York, torched by what would have been civic pride in a leading citizen who foresaw the ruinous removal of his town's sole and thriving industry; such a sentiment incites as surely as love and other tense emotions.

"We're going to see about that!" he grated. He rubbed his swollen eye. He had been a martyr in the cause of replacing lead with silver! He looked up into the sky from which no rain of dollars would fall on the appointed day.

"Yes, marm, that's a thing that's going to be looked into. It's took on a new slarnt all of a sudden."

"What are you going to do?" she queried with hysteric interest.

He meditated. His eyebrows wriggled. Scrolls were set into his forehead. He gazed up into the heavens with the profound concentration of an epic poet or a cross-word-puzzle worker.

She waited, breathless, lips apart, to hear the momentous announcement of what Mr. York would do. Her actress soul was on fire. There were such dramatic possibilities in this affair!

"What? What? Tell me! What will you do?"

Mr. York gave her the most portentous stare he was able to manage with one eye. "You keep it all to yourself, marm. Don't let on to nobody—not to your husband—nothing what I'm telling you. But what I'll do will be—and there ain't no doubt about it—what will be done will be—*something!*"

Then he folded his arms across his breast and strode slowly and tragically away across the ledges.

The lady, erstwhile of the stage, found this reticence delightfully thrilling, entirely satisfactory. Exposition of Mr. York's deep plot would have deprived the thing of its real charm.

In the castle she smoothed her demeanor and affected to be resigned to circumstances. Therefore, at dinner, continuing in bland ignorance of any plots by loyal villagers, Mr. Barown renewed his pledge to the officers.

Mr. York had confided not a bit more explicitly to himself while he walked away. "Yes, sir, something will be done in a crickitul case like this. But what the blue hell is that something?"

VI.

AT Smyrna Junction on a bright morning a private Pullman was set off from the through express out of New York. From Smyrna a branch railroad extended to the

North Country. After a wait of an hour for the south-bound express the upcountry train would tow the exclusive Pullman on its way.

An exceptionally jolly party of city men occupied the private car. They were not at all interested in the scenery at Smyrna. Four games of draw poker had started one mile north of Grand Central Station and were still going strong. Between deals there persisted genial comment on what lay ahead of them at good old Joe's place.

The down express brought morning newspapers from Bangor. One of the jolly party hustled out to the train news agent and bought a copy to get stock reports.

Standing on the station platform he snapped out the newspapers and immediately lost all interest in hunting up quotations.

He goggled at a three-inch, black-letter cross heading which spanned the first page from side to side.

ATROCIOUS ATTACK ON FEDERAL OFFICERS BY RUM KING'S RETAINERS

Affair Staged at Queer Feudal Fortress in Maine Woods.

"Baron" Barown Charged With Conspiracy and Inciting Violence.

There was more in the headlines, in smaller type, but the scout of the jolly party did not waste any more time in reading. He ran to the conductor of the south-bound express and distracted that official's impatient attention from his watch and laggard baggage handlers.

"Hitch that private Pullman—that one on the side track—onto your train, conductor!"

"I haven't any orders to do so, sir!"

"You're getting 'em now—hot off the bat!" He shoved a card into the trainman's hand, and the name and what the stranger had to say about the trimmings belonging to that name, brought a quick salute and a bawling for a shifting engine to get busy.

Two minutes later the gentleman with the newspaper had succeeded in effectually distracting the attention of the jolly party from draw poker. He was reading aloud, from his rostrum on a seat in the end of the car, the horrible details of what had just happened at good old Joe's place, to wit:

Federal officers, sent to convoy an important witness to Washington, had trusted to the deceitful promises and pledges of J. P. Brown, alias Van Barown, and in that trustfulness had put off clothes and guns and had gone to sleep peacefully in the castle's beds.

They had been set upon in the still watches of the night by a horde of retainers, maintained by Brown, incited by Brown, commanded by Brown, and had been kicked and beaten, were half drowned in the cold waters of a moat and then had been obliged to flee from a rain of stones, their clothes under their arms, footing it through the night over the ledges. So ran their statement to the press.

There was considerable sarcastic comment in the report, mentioning the profits in rum running and elaborating on the idea of using those profits to build a feudal castle in these days in America, land of liberty and enlightenment. There was ironical humor regarding "Whiskeag" as being a felicitous location for a rummy's retreat.

The affair was pointed to as evidence of the insolence characteristic of new-rich lawbreakers and it was suggested that this most insolent miscreant of all would be picked upon to serve as an example of what the law would do to high-up fellows, in addition to forcing the prisoner to expose those high-uppers.

The officers who had been interviewed dwelt upon their polite attitude and their care in informing Mr. Brown, or Barown, that he was wanted merely as a witness. But there was to be no more politeness, now that he had developed into such an amazing criminal.

The Federal men, the county sheriff, his deputies and a posse which included a small army of constables, all were march-

ing against the feudal castle. They were taking along machine guns as well as small arms. It was intimated that the renaissance of feudalism in America would be effectually wiped out before another night veiled the castle turrets in shadows.

THE train was moving rapidly when the reader finished.

The members of the jolly party peered out of the windows. They had not bothered to look at any of the scenery until then, during the trip. Points of compass and landmarks meant nothing to them.

One of them jumped for the bell rope. The gentleman with the newspaper overcame the panic-stricken traveler and obliged him to sit down.

"But we're heading straight into hell!"

"We're heading back to New York, son! I attended to that little matter while you fellows had your busted flushes up against your noses."

There was silence while they pondered.

Then there was mutual congratulation on their escape.

"Joe must have had a sudden breakdown—he's crazy," ventured one of the party as an opinion.

"I hope he is—temporarily," said another. "It's the only thing that'll save him from Atlanta!"

Look for more of Mr. Day's work in future issues.

WHAT THEY RECESSED FOR

IN the last and crucial moments of a hot fight politicians are like thoroughbred race horses. They shy at their own shadows and jump sidewise at a whisper. Jack Hammond, the New York publicity man, proved this one night during the Baltimore convention which nominated Woodrow Wilson. The delegates had been in session for many hours. In the convention hall it was insufferably hot. Rumors of all sorts of combinations of strength for this, that and the other man were flying around. The atmosphere was volcanic.

Not only was Hammond strung up and nervous, but, having had nothing to eat since breakfast, he got weak from hunger. Whereupon he had an inspiration. He approached some of the managers of the Clark boom.

"Gentlemen," he said to them, "you know, of course, that I represent Governor Harmon on this floor. I can't say more than that now, but, if you take my advice, you will try to get the convention to adjourn for two hours. Then come to me."

Leaving that group with its mouth hanging open, he went to two of the managers of the Wilson boom.

"I can't explain now," he told them, "but this is the most valuable advice you've had since this convention got to work: if an adjournment of two hours or more is asked for, vote for it! Then come to me."

In less than fifteen minutes Senator Stone of Missouri, doughty captain of the Clark brigade, moved for a recess of two hours. The Wilson men voted with him, and the recess was ordered. Immediately thereafter both groups made a bee line for Jack Hammond. The Clark people got to him first.

"Now!" said one of them, his eyes big as butter plates. "What's the meaning of this adjournment?"

"What does it mean?" echoed Hammond. "It means I'm hungry—and I've got to have time to eat!"

By

WILL C. BEALE

The Frontiers

CHAPTER I.

FRONTIER OF THE DEEP.

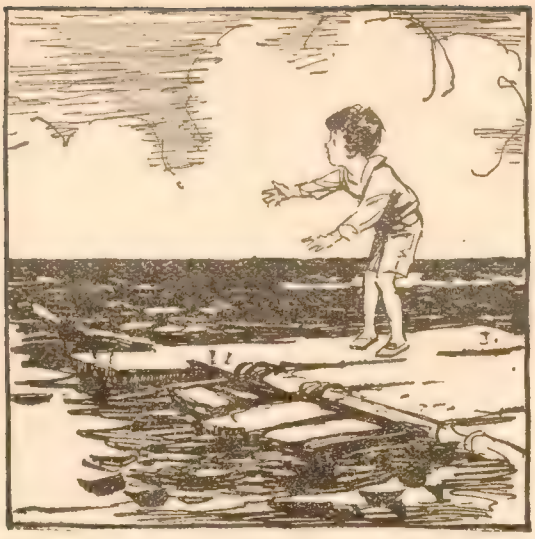
THIS is the story of human life molded and fashioned all the way through by the governing agency of the eternal sea. It is laid in a region where man was raw material, and where the sea dominates all things: the coast country of eastern Canada—in the North.

Here, along a stretch of frontier facing far-off Newfoundland, the land is bulwarked against the sea as with formidable walls of iron. For many rugged miles does this bulwark stalk along, abruptly terminating the forest solitudes running down to the sea from far in back. The coast here is colossal handiwork of nature in a somber mood.

But at one point in the coast line there is a break. At one point along the bleak, iron reaches, a relenting creative touch, in the beginning, smote a little of softness, a little of contrast, a little of beauty, and gently crumbled the rigorous coast into a tiny realm of toylike havens, of coves and inlets—a veritable playground of the sea.

There was, after all, a touch of expediency in all this. The little haven in the coast represented a real necessity in the scheme of things. Stretching far before it was the mighty Gulf of St. Lawrence, a vast pocket of the sea that gathered in its depths a teeming wealth of fish from the currents of two oceans. And this spot, with its panorama of sheltered coves, formed a vast spawning ground, wherein, year after year, in solitude undisturbed by man, the sea reproduced its living riches. In the bright spring, when the ice was gone, vast schools of herring swept in from the outlying depths, an endless, onrushing, teeming army. Offshore, following after the schools of herring, came cod—to feed a continent; mackerel, too, countless myriads of silent, black-speeding bodies, streaming in from the cool, green depths of the Gulf.

On the rocks and outlying ledges harbor seals appeared, or dotted the eddies with sleek, glistening bullet heads that gave off swift flashes of sunlight like tiny unplaced lightnings. And birds—gulls, murres, sea pigeons and old squaws—nested in frankly exposed places, or, bickering raucously,



A story of human conquest in the North. In four parts—Part I.

of the Deep

eddied up and down the dark faces of the seaward cliffs like wind-blown flurries of sparkling snow.

By the time spring became swallowed up in summer new-generated life filled the waters and peopled the air. Through the summer it grew and developed, each after the manner of its kind, until far into the autumn. Then the silent, icebound winter imposed eternal rest.

In all this country of solitudes, the great, living, governing factor was—the sea. Throughout all the ages the sea had imposed its own ordinance on the face of all about, and nature had tempered her functions to its moods and passions. And then into this little haven, a generation or so ago, came man.

The sea remained the same.

But, though great were the changes on shore, the sea seemed to stamp itself with equal calm facility on the new life that now held—the human life—and came to reflect its moods and passions also in the heart of man.

God himself probably sent the first man into this little region of natural wealth—for the man was a good man, and worthy of his office. But it seems to be a divine decree that new country is only broken and brought to its own through the constant outpouring of hope, and faith, and courage—aye, and of sweat, and blood, and tears—and this little corner of the earth came to manifest all these—came to know deathless faith, deadly strife, bitter disillusionment, and crucified love—and it is of these I write.

CHAPTER II.

THE PIONEER.

PIERRE LEGERE—from up St. Octave country in the Province of Quebec—was a man with a vision. For the early years of his life it had been vague and not quite revealed. Pierre had been restless and a wanderer, like many a Frenchman—a heritage, possibly, from constantly fluid ancesters. But later, Pierre's vision took definite form and he knew it or what it was, the urge of the founder—the builder; the craving to take some little corner of God's creation and reclaim it from the raw; to establish life in it himself, and develop it along the lines

of his own inner growth. And be it known right here that Pierre's own inner growth was rooted and grounded deep in the matter of—faith.

So Pierre became a wanderer—with a purpose. The remote places called to him always, called to him powerfully of their unspoiled cleanness. And inasmuch as his life had been spent by the water, the sea country was inevitable. So—a matter of twenty or twenty-five years ago—Pierre set forth to find just that combination—of remoteness and of sea country. He took his wife and baby, and Jean Codiac, a half-breed Micmac, and started out from the St. Octave country and journeyed east and south, and finally made the coast.

THE coast, where he came out, was a grim proposition. It ran along like a mighty strip of iron and was quite impossible. But he traveled along it undismayed, and one day of sheerest beauty he came out upon the little broken coast country we have spoken of, and—Pierre Legere stood on a headland transfixed, for, lo! before him his life's vision lay revealed.

From behind him the spruces parted and the half-breed Micmac stepped forth. Legere gripped the Indian's arm tensely with one hand and swept the wonderful scene with the other. Below them the great gap in the sea wall gave inward upon peerless beauty, and even as they gazed down they could see clearly from their great height the teeming manifestation of fish life in the clear green depths below.

They gazed far out. Low around the seaward horizon, as round as a mighty bowl, ran bubbling domes and turrets of clouds—encircling dream structures in burnished grays and slates and pinks, with the sea painted in, in molten silver. The shining surface was wholly empty. A drifting line of gulls, trailing sinuously down an eddy like strung pearls afloat, wrought white splinters of light from the dropping sunlight. That was all. It was grandeur and his voice took on a graver note—"The place beyond compare!"

Legere stirred. "Virgin coast and rich in its resource," he said as though to himself. "It is the place I have seen in my dreams and I'm coming back to stay, Jean. Here will I found a settlement that in the time to come will open up this region as yet untouched, the land heavy with timber, the sea a spawning ground of riches. And"—his voice took on a graver note—"the place will be my own, Jean—and the life, I, Pierre Legere, shall direct."

The half-breed was still staring afar. "There is scarce time in one man's life for all that, m'sieu'."

A big joyous thing sprang into Legere's face as though from sudden recollection. *"En effet, mon Jean! En effet!* But have I not a son?" He shook his head, and laughed aloud. "A tiny son, Jean, but the world will see!"

Lingeringly he turned away from the sea, made suddenly into the thicket, and the Indian followed.

A few miles inland, camped in the silent wilderness, Legere had left his wife and infant child with two other voyageurs. At nightfall he strode into camp with the air of settled achievement in his bearing and joy in his face.

His wife, a comely young Canadienne, came gladly to meet him, her child in her arms. Pierre kissed the woman and caught the child to his heart. He knelt with him in the firelight. From his shirt he pulled forth a silver crucifix and dropped it about the child's neck, holding the cross before his eyes. *"Mon petit fils,"* he said solemnly, "a new country has been intrusted to thy father by the good God. As to what will be required in its breaking, who knows? But, with Pierre, thy father, I consecrate thee, also, to its development. *In nomine Deo——"*

The mother knelt devoutly by. The Indian showed somber and immovable across the fire. The firelight glinted brightly off the silver cross in fitful flashes of living light.

Pierre Legere was a dreamer of dreams. It is the dreamers that upset worlds, and often start grave things which it befalls others to finish.

CHAPTER III.

ST. ANNE'S OF THE FISHERMAN.

HAPPINESS!

Happiness of creating, than which no joy of life can be deeper or truer; happiness of giving, which is the direct offspring of the first; happiness of loving, of directing, of achieving—all these Pierre Legere experienced to the full in the year that attended the founding of his settlement.

By fall he had his little village already begun. It was located on a little upward slope at the back of a sheltered cove. Spruces, thick, dim-recessed, ran all around the background; before it lay the perfect harbor of the cove, its crinkling waters opening on the sea without.

And his cosettlers? They were men Pierre brought back with him from the homeland up in the St. Octave country, four men whom he knew and loved—four men and their families. The rich promise of the spot in the coast filled these, too, with zeal. They attacked the solitudes eagerly, industriously.

Late in September, Pierre and one other made back again to the St. Lawrence country, and Pierre bought a little schooner and loaded it carefully with provender against a long winter. It was an odd little cargo—things assembled with equal regard for the body, and for the soul; for along with salt to cure the fish, and ammunition and seal gear, were the material and sacred things for a place of worship—a little altar, and a little bell which might summon to morning mass and vespers.

The first winter *was* hard. But the stores of herring they had smoked, of cod they had cured, the deer and moose and bear they had salted away from the fall carried the men and their families through amply. And Pierre? All winter Pierre was busily at work, busily and silently, with a fervent uplift on his face that no hardship could have assailed. All through the long lonely weeks of persistent ice and snow, from slabs of soft pine, from spruce and hemlock, Pierre was fashioning sanctified things. He had begun on the assembling of his crude little altar; a set of frames to hold the blessed pictures, the stations of the way of the cross; a pedestal which should support the image of the Blessed Virgin. For with the opening of the new season Pierre was to start building the little church that was to crown his labors, and fulfill complete the measure of his dreams.

Spring broke. Within a day, almost, the world sprang to life. The sea burst asunder its vast coverlid of ice. The wild geese came back, streaming north against the sun like strings of bubbles mounting upward in keen wine. Then came a night when the mystery of the Gulf of St. Lawrence was achieved, and the ice disappeared, silently, spectrally, as is the way with this region. Early the next day Pierre Legere broke ground in a little hollow on a spruce-clad slope and started his church.

All through the days that followed life grew apace in the tiny world nestling in the hollow of the coast. Its renown had gone widely forth back up in Pierre's home country, and with the progress of spring, craft bringing men from the home country, from the fishing country up coast and from the regions south, sailed into Pierre's cove, drawn on the mysterious scent of riches. And, already, these planned to establish themselves.

And while the people of a new little town were assembling, Pierre finished his church, and sailed out from the little cove on an errand of first importance. Late on an afternoon, a fortnight later, he came back. His little schooner was sighted from one of the lofty headlands. Then, from the dim aisles of the forest, from the potato fields, from the fish sheds, and from the cabins, the people of the little hamlet, down to the tiniest babe, came to be slowly assembled together down on the shore.

THERE was no demonstration when the little schooner made into the cove and came to anchor. There was a deep-running interest, a sober intentness. Women straightened their kerchiefs decorously;

men made clean and decent the newest dinghy, and pushed off.

When they landed again Pierre Legere stepped forth and gave a steadying hand to the man he had brought back with him. He was a tall man and slight in build, but there was a quiet power shining from his deep-set eyes. He wore the garb of a priest.

He raised a hand aloft in benediction, and the people all around knelt a moment, with bowed heads. Then Pierre spoke. "My friends, I bring to you Father Andre! No venture, great or small, can live long without the blessing of God upon it. Our little town of the sea is to be my life's work. I have tried to build well, in site, in men, and in faith, and great things are ahead for us. But man must keep close to God in all things. I have consecrated our little town to Him, and to St. Anne, the blessed patron of health and well-being, that we may be spared to make it live. As such it shall be known. Make ready, then, all. To-morrow we will set apart, and this man of God shall consecrate our church and ask a blessing on our work."

The priest moved wonderingly among them, his face beaming. "It is glorious, your sea country!" he said. "Let us try to be worthy of its great benefits."

They ushered him happily to a new little cabin next the church, an austere little place were it not for the loving reverence that had gone into its building and equipment, and then, for the night, Pierre Legere took him to his own household.

A few moments later Pierre stepped out from his doorway. A little band of the men, freed from the gently restraining presence of the priest, hailed him jovially. *"Quelles nouvelles á la cour, Pierre?* What's going on back in the home country?"

He told them. A new parish had been created; the crops had been poor but the fishing fair; there had been weddings, a death; a customs officer had been found murdered near Nons Joli, and the whole section was filled with officers of the crown looking for one Saul Budro, a cutthroat and smuggler, whom the good God knew was the very worst man in all East Canada.

At the name a fisherman crossed himself devoutly.

After the evening meal, Pierre and Father Andre stood on a headland looking out across the sea. The waters were moving cold and gray; the sky was like a leaden bowl turned upside down—there was dark brooding in things.

The priest pointed. "We are returned in good season, my Pierre. It looks like a serious storm."

Pierre stared out, somnolently. "It foretells the line gale, perchance, father—the season when the sun crosses the line. It is very late this year." He turned smilingly. "But we are safe, here, father. You will see."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEA BRINGS GOOD; AND THE SEA BRINGS EVIL.

THE day of consecration opened in stress and storm. For many years the people of St. Anne's looked back upon it as an omen of ill. By nightfall the little cove was a gulf of blackness, a vortex of great winds. Aloft was a constant shrill screaming; below, the sea, too, expressed its agitation, hoarsely, and long rolls of deliberate, roaring breakers that simply *were* in the blackness—suddenly, phantomlike—sped shoreward hissing and foaming, and melted into nothingness again in a brawling uproar of displaced shingle. Back from the sea, where the village would be, a single row of four spots of light, the lighted windows of the little church, held unwinkingly in the blackness, and, in a lull, came the chanting of voices from the direction of the lights—men's voices, rich and full, and the quavering treble of women:

"Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes——"

And now, off toward the sea—a *presence.* Nothing was visible. It was simply that off there somewhere in the maniacal blackness the thing of life, and what is called death, were being rearranged in new

relations. The night seaward was filled with it.

Up in the little church the men felt it. The sea breeds in its people an unerring "feel" for its moods, and although it was the first vespers in the little place men stirred uneasily on their benches or shifted their feet nervously on the rough floor.

Benediction, and the men shuffled hurriedly without, and made sturdily down the slope to the beach. They could not *see* off there in the darkness, but more powerful than ever was the *feel* of grave happenings. Suddenly in a lull came something real—a far-distant hail; a moment, and it came again.

Pierre Legere seized a lantern and ran stumbling along the beach to a tiny fish house down one side of the cove. The others followed. Here with fumbling haste they assembled every available lantern, and lit them all. It made a bright illumination that shot a broad white pathway out the wide doorway and across the water.

And soon *it* appeared. Sagging heavily into the pathway of light came the bulky mass of a wreck-tangled schooner. A hoarse hail reached them plainly now, and against the ghostly white of the sails, smearing the surface like the great, pallid, hovering wings of Azrael, came an almost visionary glimpse of a clinging man's body.

Already Pierre Legere was buckling on some oilskins, his ruddy face showing collectedly above the dull-glinting black raiment. A man snatched his arm and shouted loud in the uproar. "What use, Pierre? You can't make him before he's on the rocks!"

And Pierre's reply—even, fervent, trustful: "But I can try. This man has been sent by le bon Dieu. Who knows? Perchance his life may mean great things for St. Anne's!" It was a ghastly spirit of prophecy that spoke in Pierre's heart.

They dragged a dory down the beach and into the sea. They clung to it, madly, until the rescuer tumbled in and set his oars. The dory surged outward—poised, toppled loftily on a foaming crest, and was gone in the black trough of the sea.

From the shelter of the shed they saw it again, indistinctly, when it labored crazily into the streak of light, now dimmed to a pallid gray by the distance. They saw it topple perilously. They saw it swirled side on to the sea. And they saw the seas roll it over and over in a white sepulcher of spume.

Ten minutes later one of the throng standing tranced, and rigid, and sickened, suddenly leaped free from his spell and pointed out into the wan-lit streak of light. A faintly struggling human mass showed wetly a moment and disappeared. Again it showed, sagged heavily atop a sea, and rolled over. Some one shouted a hoarse man scream of wild exultation. They launched another dory with three men, and made off—toppling, teetering, plunging deep.

And they brought Pierre ashore, Pierre and his man, and bore them both up the beach and into the shed. And after a moment Pierre could stand, weakly, against the hogsheads of salted fish. And somehow he could laugh, weakly, foolishly, a bit hysterically perhaps, as might one who has looked straight into the face of death —and come away.

And the rescued man? He lay face down in a pool of sea water on the floor. They stuck a nail keg under his stomach, and the salt water dribbled thinly out of his mouth onto the planking.

The figure kicked a little—jerkily. Its arms pulled in toward its trunk—slowly, mindlessly, as if the current of consciousness coursing on through their length found all new and untried territory. A leg crawled up, and was angled acutely, tensely. Suddenly the body retched, coughingly, stranglingly, with great sawing gasps between. The man rolled over and sat up.

There was a dead moment of gripping amazement, of startled fear. A man crossed himself precipitately. The nervous twitching grins were wiped off the face of Pierre Legere. The man had turned toward them a black-bearded face, slashed across the cheek with a furious scar. It was Saul Budro, outlaw, scourge

of the Quebec water country—the one man in all Canada no hamlet would have welcomed.

CHAPTER V.

THE BORDER WOLF.

SAUL BUDRO never left St. Anne's except to carry out plans for coming back to establish himself permanently, and when his intention became known a grim barrier fell across the life of Pierre Legere. Saul was a smuggler of caste; a specialist in contraband, goods or human; a man to whom national frontiers from Vancouver to Maine were but negligible considerations, invisible alike to sight and code. He was the border wolf of two countries; he commanded a score of lieutenants and he had a dozen lairs.

But of all his nooks for operations from Quebec down to the Cape Breton coast, St. Anne's had struck him at a glance as supreme. For reasons to appear, his joy at it was fully as thrilling as Pierre's. He came back in May in a strange craft, specially built, carrying a strange cargo, specially selected, and Pierre met him on the beach. Pierre's face shone calm and steadfast, and there was that in his gray eyes not to be held lightly. "Saul Budro," he said, "there is no place for thee or thy traffic in St. Anne's."

"That is for me to prove," Saul grinned. "I find it a place ideal. Your little St. Anne's, hidden away here out of the world, is less than a hundred miles from the border of Maine, through the wilds. That is far shorter than all water, and much less conspicuous. For certain of my cargoes that transport themselves it is ideal. And you, my good Pierre, discovered it for me."

Pierre Legere's face was gray in its sternness. "You shall never fasten on St. Anne's, Saul. I swear it!"

Budro's face darkened. "Look you," he said, "if you go interfering with me or my business I'll make you and your little frontier a roosting place for crows."

All that night the little cove resounded with the echoes of hammering, going on across on the other side from the village. When morning broke Budro had the framework of a big shedlike building up and well-nigh boarded in. It was an odd building. There were no windows in it. Up under the roof were small squares for light—like portholes. That was all.

That day Budro dispatched two men with axes and a compass into the forest. And all that week a little swarm of the men left behind, under Saul's direction, clambered busily like bees about and all over the place, until the building was finished. It had but one opening—a door down the beach. The day it was done Saul's two other men emerged from the forest and joined the others. Their job in the forest was finished. They had blazed a trail through the sparsely settled country direct to the Maine border. And that night——

Very late, Pierre Legere, from his little window, saw a bright light across the cove. He dressed, slipped around the shore and drew nigh behind the trees. He looked on sinister things. Men in boats were bringing ashore goodly bales that were fabrics, and assortments of small cans, that were opium. A lantern hung by the exit from Saul's retreat. And then, one by one, Pierre saw the emotionless yellow faces of Chinese emerge from the building, gleam a moment in the glow like ancient ivory carvings, and, heading toward the forest, file away into the night.

It sickened Pierre—sickened him to his soul. God had led him to this spot where he might give his life to the development of his ideals; and it was as though a foul bird had perched on his banner. It was not to be!

THE final chapter in the founding of St. Anne's—and the most vital one—closes thiswise:

The future of the little place had come to hang entirely on the issue between these two men. Pierre set himself to get rid of the intruder even at cost of life itself, and day after day labored to find a way of doing it.

Meanwhile, Saul fatted on satisfaction, and day after day counted the advantages

of his new location. He had made a splendid move. The stuff he got out of the country could be assembled here in absolute secrecy; the stuff he brought in could be brought with laughable openness. Here he had nothing to fear from the States, and here he could snap his fingers at Ottawa; he could be reached only by water, which offered advance notice always.

But here Saul always came coldly to earth in his self-congratulation. All this was possible only so long as the place remained a mere unknown fishing hamlet. If the place grew to a point of prominence —if the natural resources came to be developed and the country opened up, as this damned Legere dreamed, why——

Pierre spent his days seeking an outcome. So did Budro.

The silent warfare grew to a grim intensity. And Pierre had decided on his campaign. He would broadcast the little place far and wide—its wealth, its possibilities. To be sure, it would bring in all sorts and conditions of men, and much life that was riffraff, a consideration which seared Pierre's soul. But it would be better than things as they were. For in a community of some extent they would be accorded inspectors, patrols—and Budro would be dislodged in the publicity. Pierre was waiting weather to go to Quebec and the mother country. He had every plan laid. And Saul learned of them—all.

It seemed even then that destiny was sowing the seeds and future plans—that the great issues in men and lives that were eventually to attend the development of this little hamlet were beginning then.

There came a day when Pierre was down on the shore rigging trawls. He strung the last hook, rose and stretched himself and gazed out onto the gray, satiny sea. Offshore a thin film of fog held above the water. The fog had drifted in and out all morning, but now the wind was off, what there was of it. To-morrow he would run his first trawl, but first there was the matter of bait.

He stared critically at the fog offshore a moment and made his decision. He could run out to the Thread o' Life—the grim stretch of ledges so named by one of the fishermen—and try the squid for bait. And then Pierre had an inspiration—it was an impulse that changed history for St. Anne's.

First, he ran up into his little fish house and came out with some sacking. He bailed out his dinghy dry and clean, and spread the dry sacking carefully along the thwart astern, smiling at his plan. Over on his wharf, Saul Budro watched him and wondered in secret. Then Pierre, with all in the little craft made snug and dry, started up the cove for his house.

It was warm in the sunup in Pierre's dooryard. Pierre's wife sat in the low doorway mending a dip net, weaving swiftly across the rent with twine threaded in a wooden shuttle. Pierre's wife was a Canadienne from Montreal. Her forbears had been Irish. She spoke English mostly but now she was crooning a happy little nursery rhyme in French patois to the sturdy little boy playing with the twine at her feet.

"C'est la poulette grise
Qui pond dans l'église—
Elle pondera un beau petit co-co
Pour le petit qui va faire do-do!
Do—diche—o—do—le gros loup va venir bientot."

Little Davy was a wonder chap now, sturdy and fearless and a marvel of childish beauty. He understood both tongues but, following constant association with his mother, his own conversational beginnings were mostly in English. He looked up as she finished. "Sing 'Kidd,' mahm," he pleaded.

Margaret Legere laughed softly, and chided lovingly. "Ferocious little lamb it is, that wants such bloodthirsty tales!"

Perhaps already the problem of a man's faith, as told in the grim old song, intrigued little David's mind as it came to do years later. "Sing it! Sing it!" he demanded imperiously.

The woman laughed again and again, and sang, in English now:

"My name was Robert Kidd, as I sailed, as I sailed,
And God's law I did forbid, as I sailed."

SHE stopped and smiled at her husband striding up from the shore. Pierre clapped his hands merrily before the child. "Thy father goes off to Thread o' Life for bait, son of my heart. Wilt go?"

Would he? The child scuttled indoors eagerly, and he appeared in the door dragging tiny oilskins by the sleeve, his bright little face and sunny hair beautiful under a little black sou'wester.

His mother looked at Pierre uneasily. "The fog is outside, Pierre. I feel strange. I wish ye wouldn't go."

"We'll be back before it makes in, *p'tite maman!*" Pierre made for the squid gear in his little shed.

Meanwhile, across the cove, Saul Budro had roused to sudden action. A sinister impulse had risen to life within him. He jumped down to the beach and moved swiftly to Pierre's boat. He seized the compass from under the stern thwart and hurled it overboard. Then he threw a leg over the gunwale and pressing steadily with a mighty boot heel he started a seam down near her stern. There was no one nigh—none save a little lad of eight or ten who had been hunting the beach for lobsters. The boy stood watching, wide eyed, to one side, but Saul hurled him out of his way and made back to his stand.

It was a little later, making offshore, that Pierre Legere noted with some perplexity the water making constantly in the bottom of the boat. "Thy father's boat is like a sieve to-day, little man. Thou must bail and work thy passage." He laughed, but it bothered him.

A little later the child was still laboring manfully with his little rusty bailing dish, but he seemed to make no headway with the swashing water. And now, Pierre cast an uneasy look about them. They were surrounded mysteriously by an eerie thin mist—soft, filmy, evanescent, holding the sun above them centered with a silver halo; but ahead it loomed densely, leaden gray. "The fog plays a game with us to-day, little man. Get out thy compass and thou shalt tell thy father how to steer." It was ever a game of delight to the child.

But the compass was not in the stern. Pierre stepped aft, knelt, and felt all about. Then he sprang back. His weight evidently had started the leak desperately active.

The fog was drifting thick about them now, a cold, gray murk that swallowed sun and distance and direction. They might have been floating in ether, a thousand miles off in space. Pierre seized the oars and began to row, and Pierre knew fear. It seemed as though the tide had swung them around, and he pulled powerfully, as nearly as he could judge, in the direction of the shore.

SUDDENLY the dinghy struck, with a crash, and water surged in through planks smashed in her bow. They had struck on the ledges themselves. In a fury of action Pierre was out upon the already half-submerged rocks with his son clasped tight to his heart. In the deadly peril of the rising tide matters shot swift through Pierre's mind. There was no time to lose. Ashore they would not be uneasy about him for hours.

He set the child down on a pinnacle of rock yet above the surface. He pulled the wrecked dinghy up out of the water. With superhuman strength he strove both with hands and feet and tore out sections of her sides. These he lashed upon the oars with the painter—a frail little raft for a tiny weight. He snatched up his son. He crushed him to his breast. He held him tight. In that one moment Pierre strove to *feel* the little figure with every quivering fiber of his body—with every groping antenna of his soul.

A little while, and Pierre began speaking swiftly. It was all tragically simple, but his eyes still fared about helplessly. There was no way out—the water was already up above his ankles. "The good God hath need for thy father, little son," he said, "but thou——"

The child, staring wide eyed into the deep, earnest eyes, fell suddenly forward and hugged his father desperately, madly.

Again, and somberly, now. "I am to go. But thou must carry on the work of

thy father. Live, little son—live for St. Anne's; live for her, fight for her, die for her! The good God hath given thy father a vision of great things for St. Anne's!"

The water went swaying around and up the man's legs. The sea was going about its making of history calmly, inexorably, chilling the very sources of life with its soulless disregard.

A little, and the man swept sudden tears from his eyes, pointed to the little raft and laughed cheerily. "Ho, ho, my son! Behold thy brave little ship!"

The child patted his father's cheeks frantically, snatched the bared head in tiny palms, and planted moist kisses on the bearded mouth.

"And see! Such great honor, my little man! Thou alone are captain! The tide will set thee ashore!" Legere laughed again, a tragic mirth.

He set the child down on the raft. He gazed one tense moment into the little face. "Remember, my son! God, and St. Anne's!" He gave the raft a little push.

The child stretched forth his arms, pleadingly. A vast upheaval of emotion surged through the man on the rock. He rushed into the sea and caught the child again in a frenzied passion of tenderness. "Dost love thy father?" he gasped in his ear.

The child clung frantically, desperately, until the man disengaged him. Legere pushed the raft away again, and stood erect and now quite calm, his arm upraised. "Till we meet again, my son," he called. "Au revoir!"

The child on the raft waved a palsied little hand. "Au 'voir!"

The fog drifted about them.

And between.

CHAPTER VI.

DAVID.

A YOUNG man, strikingly big and vital and alive among the quiet little appointments about him, stood, hat in hand, just within the door of Father Andre's little sitting room. In spite of his superb physical bearing there was a reserved restraint, almost shyness, about him.

He spoke hesitatingly, but yet with a youthful eagerness to the man by the fire. "The ice has gone from the sea, m'sieu', and I have come to tell you—my—my great chance has come at last."

For twenty-four years David Legere had lived and developed among the fishermen of St. Anne's. He had become a fisherman almost as soon as he could handle an oar. His earliest recollection was the discovery that things were somehow *different* in the little home left by Pierre Legere—that things were not right. Vaguely it grew upon him that it was not in the proper order of things for men from other homes to be providing much of the fish, the flour, the tea in his own little household, and the man—the provider—was born in him young. He had never failed in it.

For ten years, perchance, this occupied him. Then, he had awakened—awakened to St. Anne's—to himself. First he saw his father's little hamlet, begun a mere half dozen cottages, growing—growing like his own body—his own mind. He saw the little cottages increasing; he saw little shops come into being, and a little schoolhouse for the younger element. On the water, too, he saw growth in things; big craft from down shore made in to St. Anne's to buy fish, craft that, in the passing of time, came to be equipped with gasoline power, craft that overruled the sea to great extent—craft of power.

With all this David Legere came to sense the world outside. And he saw St. Anne's in her relation to the world, and vague things came to waken within him—living things, restless things. At eighteen he had dragged from his mother the story of his father's life and his father's dreams. Even in its somber setting accorded by his mother's grief he saw the glory of it, felt the fire of it running through his own veins like ardent, burning quicksilver; his father's dream of a town of his own founding, of a community—the salvaging of a little corner of the earth from the raw of things eternal, and the lifting it up

to take a worthy place in and of the world. To the boy it was epic. And he set himself to study the little world his father had founded, set himself to carry out the work. And in the last two or three years he had come to know for a certainty the one factor that first was necessary to lift the crude little half-forgotten town of the coast up to a place of strength and prominence, the one thing that would——

The priest understood. He looked into the earnest eyes of the young man by the fire and his own eyes filmed a bit wistfully. "I suppose thy great chance means 'great' for St. Anne's?" he said tentatively. They were fast-bonded friends, he and Legere. Always had he aided him with counsel —with guidance.

"It is of that I came to tell you, Père Andre. I am going to the Magdalenes for the spring run of herring."

"Yes?" The priest was gently puzzled. "How? And with whom are you going?" he asked.

David Legere might have been speaking of some great good fortune that had suddenly unfolded at his touch. "A vessel came in here last night from down shore. Two men of the crew had slashed and stabbed themselves out of a berth, and the captain put into St. Anne's to set them ashore and get two others. I shipped to go, m'sieu'—I and Jo Michelle. We will go together."

Père Andre smiled, still a bit uncertainly. There was still some elusive significance in things that he had failed to grasp, and the young man broke out again unrestrainedly.

"Don't you see it, m'sieu'? We—we are hired for good wages, and we get, too, a —a share in the herring. It is early for the ice to go, and there will be a big run." He began pacing restlessly. "It will mean that when I return I can then build my weir—the first sardine-herring weir on this coast, for it seems that in its herring alone lies the future of St. Anne's. It will mean that I can fit the weir with a marline, and—and have all in readiness for the summer school that I know for a certainty swarms always on this shore." His voice dropped to a level almost reverent in its youthful fervor, and the halting in his speech vanished in his intentness. "It will mean the first step toward opening up this coast as we have always talked; it will mean the canneries; then the railroad down to this coast that my father always dreamed, the one thing needed to make of St. Anne's a place worthy of the life my father gave for it!"

THE priest was regarding him with wistful tenderness. He spoke softly —in French now, the medium of their forbears. "Do you think to do all this, alone, my son? It is the work of men ripe in years, in knowledge, and in worldly experience."

The boy was shaking his head in an awed helplessness. "I—I know," he stammered. "And I—I have none of these—not years, not experience, not learning." He glanced vainly around at the books, the prints, the implements of knowledge about him. "But I have a strong body, and I have my father's dream, strong and alive in me, too, m'sieu'. I—I cannot tell you of it, the—the way my father lives in my thoughts. I seem to feel so many, so many *big* things here"—he touched his breast—"that I—that I——" Suddenly he made a gesture of hopeless resignation, the helpless surrender of a soul that cannot express itself. "I—I cannot say all the things within me, but there are times, m'sieu', when—when it scares me!"

"C'est le bon Dieu, mon fils." The voice of the priest firm and level, was charged with conviction. "It is the creator spark, a tiny spark of His own divine nature that the good God implanted in us all. It was ordained in the beginning that each of us should help on the work of creation, that each should lay hold of some little portion of things created—of men, perchance; of lands, of talents, and through the application of our own little powers help along the whole." He stopped a moment while his eyes grew deeper still in their earnestness. "Each and every one of us holds the spark, my son. Some of us"—sadly, wistfully—"sometimes, some

of us seem to labor long and with meager return; but there *are* souls who seem to be the elect, who seem to be of God's chosen, and to such as these—to such as these the little creator spark is as a flaming torch ready to their hands!"

"That's it, m'sieu'—a torch, a torch! But, to me, always ahead! And, m'sieu', there are times"—David Legere's eyes were very deep, now—"there are times, m'sieu', when it seems I may not lay hold on the torch—ever." In the electric hush it seemed that Destiny had come to live in the little room.

And then, breathed evenly through the stillness, the priest went on. "To do all this compasses much. A man must first *be* great, to be intrusted with great things; must first conquer *himself*, ere he may conquer the world. You hold the seeds of great things within you, my son, but you are yet untried. Thy manhood still sleeps, but one day it will awake. Can you hold steadfast, do you think?" He gazed on the other now in an agony of yearning compassion. And the boy stared back. Bared in his face was a lifetime's shy worship of the priest. He was ready to fight the world to hold his regard.

Then, the tension—of a young, untried man bearing his gropings with life, and of an older world-tried man looking spellbound upon it—was broken. David Legere laughed, in abashed confusion. "I came to ask you, m'sieu', if you would write for me while I am gone, letters to the net and twine people. Find out how much it will cost—the marline for the weir, and then, m'sieu'"—the boy grinned, sagely—"find out how much less will buy it."

Père Andre emerged from his abstraction half reluctantly and smiled back wisely.

"Count on me, my son! They shall learn that every dollar of ours to pay has meant many hours of hardest labor, and that we are not to be fleeced." He rose to his feet.

"And now——" He raised a reverent hand and David Leger dropped to his knees before him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GAME OF THE STRONG LEG.

THE earth dazzled with its youth, its spring.

Outside, David Legere stood on the doorstep of the little presbytery, and gazed a long, quiet moment at the miracle being wrought by the warm, north-swinging sun. From his place up on the hillside he commanded the entire panorama of sea and land and sky.

To-day the sun had a diamond quality; the black forests seemed spilled down the heights of sun-smitten snow with the dazzling impress of overturned tar. From where he stood David Legere could hear the jubilant chuckling of a thousand rills of new-released snow water in the spruce-clothed heights up back of him; below, the irregular street of the village seemed an ankle-deep pottage of snow-dappled mud. Far off before him the sea was greenly crystal in its new freedom from ice. Its bland silver surface showed a thousand burnished moods—of curious, seeking currents; of new-faring swirls and eddies—as though of reorganization, of reëstablishment.

David Legere strode forth, and down into the village. He passed down the broad little land leading abruptly down from the little church, on down to the lower level. The little main street of St. Anne's followed a rambling haphazard course along the shore, and in the center of its course around the cove were the stores. There was the huge half-empty "company store" of Gowdy, Doan & Robertson, a big maritime fish concern of Halifax. This was a house with many of the characteristics of the old-time "trading company," which had established itself in every hamlet on the coast. Then there was the village store of Narcisse Comeau; there was the little cobbler shack of Dougal McTavish, a hard and dour Scotsman; there was the smithy of Danny Shane, who forged net bows, iron shoes, and general hardware for fishing craft. There was Felix Dorion, the notary; there was Tamant Boudreau, the little postmaster—

these and others, and then the little street dwindled in its commercial rôle, and became the roadway of frame houses, then of rough little cottages, then of log shacks housing the village's quota of Micmacs, and then—the woods.

The most noteworthy store, and by far the most popular, was the shop of Narcisse Comeau, and it was toward this that David Legere made his way.

It was a curious place, the shop of Narcisse! In the course of years it had come to be the abiding place of merchandise almost museumlike in its wide variation. Narcisse carried for sale peppermint sticks in glass jars, and kedge anchors outside the door; hooks and eyes on cards, and complete pickling vats; scented soap, and pork by the barrel. Narcisse catered to the newly born, and the newly dead; in the show case for notions was an infant's rattle of azure celluloid; and, by the stairs, the sign *"Entrepreneur"* indicated a small array of assorted coffins in the loft. At that, the place was eminently inviting and was the loafing place of the entire village.

David Legere opened the door, and started back half involuntarily. A wave of tobacco-laden air, robustly tinged with a rank sharpness of spirits, greeted him, and he noted that two men from the schooner lying off the cove seemed the center of a quite unusual hilarity.

The young man edged around to the counter and beckoned Narcisse Comeau. He began trading hurriedly for the simple necessaries for his Magdalene run—a heavy shirt, a pair of seine mitts, some "nippers"——

Some one began singing—a familiar voice. Legere's head came about in surprise. Over behind the stove sat his boatmate, Jo Michelle. Jo Michelle was the big, easy-going philosopher of St. Anne's. He had been a little lad of eight or ten when Pierre Legere, the founder of the village, had passed on. His own father had gone under in a seaman's brawl about the same time, and Jo with youthful earnestness had constituted himself the doglike guardian of Pierre's son. There had been something strange in the way he watched over him, all his early life. Now Jo was quite drunk. And he was singing buoyantly, with an encouraging arm waving time:

"A terre, à terre, bon marinier!"

A dozen voices joined in. Across on a barrel, even Dougal McTavish had ventured beyond the scope of his simple utility patois, and was singing lustily in an uncanny French of ferocious burs:

"At turr, at turr, bong ma-ri-nurrr!"

THE song ended in an unholy assortment of keys. One of the strangers, the mate of the schooner, stepped suddenly up on a box, and called out: "I challenge for *le jeu de la jambe forte!* A dollar for the man with a stronger leg than mine who can turn me over!"

The man was a big man, tall and heavy muscled. He would be no mean antagonist in the "game of the strong leg," and most of his hearers grinned sheepishly and turned away.

Then it was that he saw young Legere standing well along by the door, and called to him: "You, my lad! A dollar if you turn me over! And," he laughed encouragingly, "if I win, I'll bet it'll be a dollar well earned!"

David Legere shook his head. In his life in St. Anne's he had taken little part in the games and pastimes of the men, although these were legion.

The man on the chair grinned back, a shade scornfully. "Not afraid, are you, son? With those legs of yours you look like you could turn over a regular *cigale*—a grasshopper—as big as you are yourself!"

There was a half-hearted laugh. Then some of the older men interposed to explain, courteously. M'sieu' David was—well—he was M'sieu' David, and did not take part in their rough games. He was—different, the son of his father. The mate would know of his father, the man who had founded St. Anne's——

They stopped uncertainly in their confused excuses. David Legere had moved

forward. "I am not afraid," he said. "I will try it, m'sieu'."

There was a stir from within the knot. Jo Michelle got up from his box and elbowed through. He pressed young Legere back, grinning amiably at the mate. "No, m'sieu'. This boy, he is too green. See—his legs are yet too lean in the thighs, his back is too flat." He began peeling off his own coat. "But, I—Jo—*I* will take from you your dollar!"

"Bon! Bon!" yelled the crowd. And "Jo Michelle! Jo Michelle! Bravo Jo!"

The mate turned to the sailor with him. "All right, Sleeth. You referee."

Already was Jo stripped and on the floor, hunching about tentatively with his back and shoulders to find the spot in the worn planking which would grip him most firmly. Then settling to stillness, his body lay along the boards, straight and powerful, his thin shirt and trousers revealing muscles full and rotund, suggesting the heavy prowess of the ox.

The mate lay down beside him, with his head opposite Jo's feet. Each grasped a steadying hand back of the elbow of his opponent, and drew their bodies along past each other until the inside legs, raised in the air, locked together right, with no play either way. Then the other man from the schooner—Sleeth—began to count, sharp and clear in the tenseness. "One! Two! Three! Go!"

A sudden galvanic shock leaped through the two knotted bodies lying on the floor, and the human mass lay striving and quivering in its deadlock as though flooded by a ceaseless voltage of electricity.

At first it seemed Jo Michelle had the advantage easily, and the half-stifled prayers, the almost poetic curses, encouragement of his townsmen, passed about above him constantly. But suddenly, and puzzlingly, Jo seemed to have reached a deadlock with his man. Although he was still surging upon him with terrific force, his body turned no farther.

The man standing above the mate looked about excitedly. "It's a draw!" he cried out, loudly. "A draw!"

"Like—hell!" came from the lips of Jo Michelle. He seemed to relax a moment, to gather every atom of strength—to explode against the leg locked in his own with terrific power. The mate's body surged upward, and stopped; but, strangely, the man, Sleeth, above him, had tottered.

Something happened. David Legere wheeled about in his place in the dense-packed circle, and scattered his neighbors away from the men with an almost unconscious sweep of his arm. In the little clear space so formed the man Sleeth's foot showed planted firmly on an end of the mate's belt at the waist, thus holding the mate's body pinned securely to the floor. Legere snatched the sailor by the throat. "Get off that belt strap!" he ground out. His face was white; his eyes glittered; he flung the man bodily through the crowd to the floor.

Just then Jo Michelle let go again. The mate's body doubled up with terrific celerity, shot over in a complete somersault and fell heavily on its face.

Jo leaped to his feet. The sailor, Sleeth, was glaring fiercely at young Legere. The now-sobered townsmen, lined up protectingly by David's side, were glaring back, expectantly. Then Jo Michelle laughed a great laugh. He dragged David away sturdily.

The sailor watched them go, evilly.

David Legere had made an enemy—his first.

CHAPTER VIII.

GRACIETTE.

GRACIETTE DORION went about the morning duties in her little kitchen with a slow abstractedness wholly out of keeping with the brightness outside. At times, almost, her demure little figure seemed to droop—wearily, dejectedly.

Graciette was the stepdaughter of Felix Dorion the notary—the stepdaughter, housekeeper, and many another wage-saving institution; for Felix, for all his air of superior gentility, was known among the people of St. Anne's as being a close man, and mean—a craftsman in thrift who would expend his talents lavishly on the

paring of a potato. Felix's house was the last house on his side of the cove, but one, that one being the cottage of David Legere. The house was a half-finished, stinted little place. It held the usual two little rooms in the main house downstairs, with a tiny hall between. Over the front door was the high-gabled dormer in the roof, fitted, like a thousand other little houses of the Canadian French, with an upper door in its clapboards. But in this house the matter of the upper adornment stopped there. Felix had never built beneath the gable door the tiny little balcony which completed the upper front of the thousand others. The carpenter had been allowed the gable as a partial concession to tradition, but the door in the gable was closed to any further frivolity by nails.

In the little Dorion kitchen, Graciette wiped her hands nervously, and passed in to the little parlor window in the front of the house, passed in hurriedly, hopefully, as though she had not left it but a few moments before. Graciette was watching for David Legere.

There had come a time of poignancy in Graciette's life a few years back when she had been ready to die—of loneliness, of hard work—of Felix. For Felix, in a housekeeper, exacted a maître d'hôtel, a valet, above all, a chef, and there were times, when things didn't suit him, that he forgot himself and turned cruel. And then into her life had come David Legere.

The incident was quite commonplace. David had turned in from the road one day, had taken the ax from Graciette's trembling little hands and finished cutting her firewood. Since that day life had changed for Graciette. She never again could be lonely. She had always her blessed thoughts. Hard work was no longer hard work—it was glorified by hope. From the very start Graciette squandered herself lavishly on the boy, while David—— David was like a young pilgrim with a life's mission; remote, detached, and, so far, wholly unattainable.

This morning his passing had a double significance to Graciette. She had learned yesterday from old Barbe that he was going away from St. Anne's, and also—he was in danger. She looked for him in both directions, but the street was empty.

Back in the kitchen she surveyed things with a troubled perplexity. The day's bread rising was at a stage that needed immediate attention, and the old worn-out stove burned but sulkily, smokily in the windless morning. It would take all her attention to get it to bake, and how was she going to be able to watch for David Legere, and—— A sudden inspiration heightened the tired flush on Graciette's cheeks. There was the old stone oven out in the yard. It was a bit early to begin using it, but it would serve a double purpose, for while she was getting it ready she could see every one who passed.

She ran into the woodshed. Notwithstanding the fact that Felix counted every stick, she snatched down kindlings enough to fill her arms completely. She was braving Felix's wrath, but perhaps this would be one of the days when he would not come to dinner. In five minutes the old oven was beginning to steam in all its winter-soaked interstices. In ten it was getting hot.

Graciette ran into the house, brought out the loaves and thrust them into the oven, and in that moment she forgot—all. From where she stood she could see the Legere cottage, and far along, down on the shore, David Legere was landing from his dory. He had rowed around from the village—she had missed him. In the rush of her disappointment something stiffened within her, some fierce little thing of determination that sprang up swift and hard and unbending. She turned and made down the yard.

A few moments later, flushed, and wistfully pretty, she stood in the Legere door with a bright little "Good day!" but her heart was throbbing disturbingly.

David arose from the dinner table with a slow smile, and pulled out a chair. "Come in, Graciette."

His mother rose also. Margaret Legere was tall and broad bosomed. She was still straight and active, although her hair was long since grayed. "Ye're welcome,

dearie," she said in her gentle speech. After the death of Pierre she had reverted in her own household to the softly burred English of her own people, and it was in English that she spoke now. "We'll be havin' a dish of the new herrin'. They're fine and fat, and full o' roe. Sit ye by and have a bite." She turned busily to the stove. "My old mother always said: 'When cookin' the potatoes, daughter, always put the stranger's name in the pot,' and that I always do."

Nervously, Graciette started to refuse. Then she became conscious again of the hard little rebellious thing within her. And David was smiling at her, gravely. "Eat with us, Graciette," he invited. Unlike his mother's soft pronunciation, David called it "Grahs-yet," crisply, as would his French father.

Graciette sat down.

All through the meal the heaviness within her grew. Life with Felix had forced Graciette to capabilities of a mature woman, but just now the feelings in her heart were pitiably childlike. David was going away. Her heart kept sinking. He had never been away from St. Anne's, from her, before. An empty, frightened forlornness filled her, which she strove miserably to overcome. With him beside her, so close she could touch him, the thing of wretched loneliness choked her. She wanted to die. And then this other thing —she pushed back her plate and rose.

Out in the yard with David, the girl suddenly made up toward the heights that formed one end of the cove on the Legere side. On a commanding headland looking out to sea stood a tall, black, weather-beaten cross, a *calvaire* which marked the grave of Pierre Legere. Graciette was moving swiftly up toward it without having spoken, and the young man followed.

SEATED on a rock, the girl spoke. "Do you know how long you will be gone?" She was doing her best to appear calm.

He shook his head. "Until the run is over. It may be two weeks, it may be three."

She looked away. Three weeks of utter, dead loneliness! And now something fiercer still snatched at her heart. "But you are coming back? You're not planning to ship for the run back down coast?" Down coast would mean the world, and then——

"No. I'm coming back to St. Anne's, Graciette." The rapt, dreaming look, that of late years had come to distinguish his youthful countenance. deepened. "I'm never going to leave St. Anne's until I see the town what my father planned it to be."

The fierceness within the girl subsided. But she was still trembling. In the swollen flood of her stirred emotions Graciette yearned toward him with every fiber of her being. Now, it was a physical thing. She wanted to touch him, to—to nestle close, to—— But such a thing was inconceivable, always had been inconceivable, and Graciette's emotion subsided to the old hopelessness, the old helplessness, the old futility. All things of sentiment still lay dormant in the depths of David Legere's nature, still were anchored fast to the rock of his manhood. And Graciette knew it.

She sat staring out to sea. And the worrisome thing that had been in her mind all night again invaded her. She began speaking, gravely. "This is what I came to tell you, David. It has given me no peace all day." She pointed across to the far side of the cove where, all by themselves, stood a gray mysterious pile of buildings which, in the passing of years, had come to form a lair for Saul Budro, the sea runner. "Budro, the Black One, came to our house last night to see my father. I have never seen him before on this side of the cove. I heard him speak your name." She stopped a moment, and when she began again it was on a tense low note, and she had slipped back into her native French. "He will never let thy plans for St. Anne's come to pass."

A long moment, and a sullen red spark showed deep in the boy's eyes. "He cannot help it!"

The girl shook her head. Her face was drawn with its look of prophecy. "I heard

him make a terrible oath; and he is making strange plans. I am beginning to fear it is his life against thine!"

Suddenly the young man rose. He was moved with an impulse that sets itself heedlessly to win, by burning its bridges behind. "All right! I, too, shall make an oath!" he said, gravely. He went and laid a hand on the upstanding cross of the *calvaire* erected in memory of his father. And he said: "By the memory of my father, and by all the saints, I consecrate my life to St. Anne's, and I swear that neither love nor hate, nor fortune, nor the world shall turn me aside." He crossed himself reverently. It was an aspiring oath—the vow of a very young man, of one mighty in faith but with no knowledge of the world. And the girl watched him radiantly, translated with her admiration—her worship.

Then Graciette was on her feet. Recollection of Felix had suddenly seized her. "Au revoir!" she breathed, hurriedly. "I shall see you before you sail." She turned and almost ran.

Stumbling up the moist slope of the Dorion yard a little later, she clasped her hands helplessly across her breast. The door of the old oven was open. Up from its mouth streamed a thin blue film of smoke from the scorched, blackened loaves inside.

Graciette slipped into the kitchen, her eyes quite strangely deep and black. Out from the inner room strode Felix Dorion. Felix was ominously collected and calm. He came out into the kitchen turning back his cuffs.

Graciette crowded her body into a corner.

That night, among the crowd gathered on the shore to speed David Legere, Graciette was not to be seen.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EPIC OF THE HERRING.

A VAST silence lay upon the sea at the Magdalenes, a gray, brooding silence, deep with mystery. It was as though the sea held itself quiet in a passive waiting—waiting for some definite epoch in its eternal functioning.

A hundred vessels dotted the surface—vessels of many burdens, of many ports. From Newfoundland they came; from Gaspé and Cape Breton; from Lunenberg and Halifax, from Sable, from Yarmouth, and many from far-off ports on the coast of New England; and well inside the motley flotilla lay the *Grampus,* with David Legere among its crew. The fleet had been gathering many days. As soon as the ice was gone they had come sailing in from many directions to be on hand when the sea in its mysterious spring run of herring among these islands should produce and bring forth.

And now for five days they had been waiting—patiently at first, but then with growing unrest. There *had* been years when the school of herring had arrived on the vast shallow bottoms before the ice was gone, and departed before the fishermen had arrived. And now the fear was already rife among the fleet that they had arrived too late, that the herring had come and gone. Every hour of the day were men in smaller boats seen moving about over the shallows, feeling deep down in the water with long poles for the gently vibrating thrill, the nubbling contact of tiny bodies, that denotes the presence of a school.

Then early one morning David sought the captain. He stood smiling quietly, half abashed—it was ever difficult for him to express himself. "I can't explain, m'sieu'," he said in his accurate English, "but I have a *feel* that the herring are coming. I would like to take a boatmate and go to look."

The captain regarded him rather discouragingly. "It's no use. The fleet has poled every pint of water about the islands all morning."

David still smiled courteously, quietly. "Just the same I would like to try, myself."

The captain was looking at him curiously, as if he were seeing him for the first time. He was feeling the vague impress of a personality—intangible but pow-

erful. The boy was striking looking physically, of course, but there was something underlying the physical. This was no ordinary Canadian fisherman; he was a cross with something finer. The captain grunted. "All right. Go to it! Let's see what *you* can do."

He started to turn away. But Legere stopped him. "Thank you, m'sieu'. But supposing I place a school—before all the others?" David's eyes held a compelling earnestness, eagerness. It was for St. Anne's—always for St. Anne's. He knew that his flair—as the captain would say, his "hunch"—about the herring was correct, and he wanted to be assured of his own stand in things.

"Look," the captain was saying emphatically. "If you locate herring *now*—and enough to give us a load—I'll pay you ten cents a barrel, in addition to your share."

David computed rapidly. "And if there is more than your load"—the young man's eyes were deep, intense—"will you take ten cents a barrel for the use of your twine, and let me dispose of the fish as I will?"

The captain laughed carelessly. "Yes. Sure." He gazed at the other oddly. "But I've run to the Magdalenes now for twenty years, and I tell you, my friend, the herring have been here already—and gone."

There was an odd conviction about David's reply. "I think you are mistaken, m'sieu'. The herring have not come."

DAVID turned. He spoke a word to Jo Michelle. Then he sprang into the rigging and made upward for the crosstrees. Back in St. Anne's he had spent countless hours studying the habits of the smaller herring, the "sardine herring," from the headlands. In smooth weather he had learned with unerring accuracy to place the shoals by the patches of color off in the water. All day spotters from the fleet had been poling the depths along the shore north and south; now, slipping up and through the crosstrees, he directed his searching gaze east—east toward the open sea.

A single moment, and a thrill shot through him. From his lofty perch, the sea over the vast shallows in every direction showed yellowly green in pale translucence; and now, far out toward the open sea——

It was as though he looked upon secret workings. Far out a vast murkiness tinged through the shallow green of the sea, spreading through the depths like a far-reaching shadow. And it was a shadow that moved—its vague margins shifted constantly in flowing undulations, breaking out at certain points to sweep abroad through the sea's depths like a vast tingeing stain of murky sable. It was a pregnant shadow, a living shadow, and it was shifting slowly onward and inward toward the islands.

Legere slid down from the rigging with the smooth directness of a plummet. He sought the captain, and began speaking swiftly, with an unconscious authority. "I can find your load, m'sieu'. And you have still an *extra* seine in the hold—will you let me take it on the same terms as we spoke?"

The captain frowned, perplexedly. "You locate your herring first. Then we'll talk."

"I have already, m'sieu'."

There was no mistaking the calm conviction in Legere's face. The captain turned suddenly and summoned the mate. "Have them get the extra twine out of the hold," he commanded.

"And captain"—David seemed to have lost his shyness—"may I have charge of the boats?"

The captain stared about at the listening crew. "Yes," he roared, bewilderedly. "Go the limit!"

Men sprang with alacrity to Legere's command. The crew liked him, all save one—the man Sleeth, the man David had antagonized over a certain "game of the strong leg." Now, with the captain well aft, Sleeth eyed David Legere with openly sneering hostility. David waited for him, bashfully confused. "Will you come, m'sieu'—please?" he requested, quietly. Sleeth moved sullenly forward and clambered down into the boat.

The seine boat was equipped with an engine, and they towed a dory loaded with the great nets. And now every eye on every vessel watched the progress of the little tow spluttering busily along on its crooked course out through the anchored fleet to the open.

Far out Legere slowed down. The sea lay smooth and inscrutable all about. To an unskilled eye there was not the slightest sign to denote the presence of underlying herring. But, a little to leeward, David's eyes became glued to the surface. Almost imperceptibly tiny bubbles rose here and there—infinitesimal occurrences, the veriest of atoms on the surface of the sea. But his skilled eye knew them to be rising from swarming herring underneath. He shut off the engine and veered sharply to leeward.

Swiftly, from his pocket, he took a little reel of thread, with a tiny lead plummet attached, and lowered it carefully down over the side. Slowly, into his face dawned a look of thrilled certainty. The thread on his outstretched fingers was communicating to his nerves of touch a constant nubbling vibration; the plummet was coming into constant contact with a myriad passing bodies.

He gave swift quiet orders to his impressed boatmates. Jo Michelle and one other took the dory. The sea held the silence of death; men and boats moved like phantoms. The great web of the seine was paid out in a great circle, its dun-colored mesh dropping down into the sea like a deep filmy wall. Slowly the ends were drawn together. Now, the great net encircled a section of the water slowly stirring to life, teeming life. It was necessary only to draw tight the purse line, running through rings around the bottom of the net, and all within would be imprisoned against any possibility of escape.

Legere, in the seine boat, managed the purse line himself. The other end was made fast to the dory, at the other end of the circle. Slowly he dragged on the line, and then—he stopped dead. It was as though an icy deluge had suddenly drenched him. The rope was coming free! The purse line had parted! The herring could not be confined.

HE seized an oar, paddled the seine boat up alongside the dory and stepped in. In the dory Jo Michelle regarded him in surprise. Jo's mate was the man Sleeth. With a swift movement David pulled up the dory's end of the purse rope. It came up readily. About twenty feet of it dangled clear. And the end showed it had been cut.

For one quietly speculative moment Legere gazed into the eyes of Sleeth, and then the seamen from the *Grampus* beheld a marvelous thing. Legere had kicked off his boots and ripped off his reefer and vest. Then, bending low over the gunwale his body drove silently down into the icy sea outside the seine, the end of the purse line gripped in his hand. And now bubbles came up; and tiny swirls, following a slow course along the circumference of the seine.

Men gazed fascinated. Death was down there, in laboring lungs, in entangling twine. They stirred. They swore fervent whispered oaths. The feat was prodigious. The man below was reeving the parted length of the purse line back through the lower rings. Once he came up. His face emerged smoothly a still moment, the eyes closed, the nostrils quivering wide in an abnormally laboring flare. And so, a few dead seconds; then a swift powerful overset and an oily descent, the limbs working smoothly, instinctively, as though in their natural element.

Suspense grew. Men squirmed uneasily. Then, suddenly, a heavy shadow came shooting up from the gloomy depths. The man burst through the surface and made the dory. Jo Michelle grasped him and drew him in. He shook the water from his yellow mane like a great dog. His clothing clung blackly to his figure, outlining his trunk and limbs like sheerest black marble. Then he called out: "Haul in on that purse line!"

In dazed obedience the men obeyed. The purse line held fast. The seine became closed on its vast catch.

Now they were conscious of a great activity over the water. Their operations had been noted through a dozen glasses, and now the sea from the direction of the fleet was dotted with half a score of motor craft clattering over the water in thunderous echoes.

Another order came to David's men, tense—quiet. "Pay out that other seine! I'll stay here at the purse end myself!" With Jo's assistance David had swiftly peeled off his sodden clothing and wrung it out. Now he thrust his legs into his boots and leaped into his coat. In another moment the great brown coils of the second seine were dropping overboard and settling downward into the water.

The sea now was a vast reverberating region of maneuvering motor boats. Like bickering black birds of prey they were swooping out toward the seiners from all directions, the thunder of their engines echoing across the sea with a wild clamor almost terrifying. Here and there seines were being run with frantic haste, and boats were chugging still farther out to try the depths there. But the school evidently had broken up. Perhaps by tomorrow it would be in nearer shore, perhaps, also, gone.

The two seines of the *Grampus* boats, however, held a gorging harvest. The *Grampus* would carry twelve hundred barrels. In the two seines were that amount and many more. The captain had arrived and the dipping began. And bidding for the surplus followed fast and furious, for it was getting to be so late in the season that the movements of the school were only a matter of guesswork.

AND now the despoiling of the sea was going on all about. There was something epic, something tragic about it, something that stirred deeply. In a fury of greedy haste a hundred dip nets were stabbing down into the treasure hold of the submissive sea and the living horde dragged forth. In countless millions, the tiny creatures, each a perfect life developed in delicacy and beauty in the sea, were dragged forth and dumped out. Men, foul with scales, and blood, and slime, panted and sweated and cursed regally in the throes of their labor, and strained and strove and cursed again, treading and stamping and wading until the dainty little shimmering creatures fluttering about in the boats at their feet formed but a faintly twitching wallow of sticky, sordid, leaden muck.

It was evening when the *Grampus* was loaded, and the balance of the herring in the two seines loaded on other vessels; and David Legere knew that he had made money enough to assure the start of his own operations in St. Anne's.

Going back on board for the last time he sat in the stern thoughtfully. About him he was conscious of a blessed peace in the evening—the still tranquil passing of a day well spent. The sun was going down in a soft pink haze that spread a gentle radiance upon the face of the world, like a benign benediction. The men in the boats were relaxed to a weariness of deepest lethargy, their arms and legs flung wide in splay abandon, inert, motionless.

David Legere sat as though bathed in warm content. He was forcing himself to think of St. Anne's, to keep his mind off something else—a sinister recollection of the morning, having to do with the cut purse line and the man Sleeth. He made himself think of the changes his plans would make in the village; of how the village would look when the canneries should fill it with people; and the railroad should have—— Here, his mind got away from him, rebelliously, and took up the other line of thought. It had almost done for him—tying that purse line together down there in the water by the seine; it had been a killing effort trying to pull hard when deep in the water, and consequently with no resistance; it had started the blood in his nose a little; and he could not see for the snapping things in his head that blinded him.

The boat bumped the side of the *Grampus* and men sprawled over. On deck was the smell of frying things, delicious on the peaceful air. The cook had stayed aboard from the first boat. So had Sleeth, who

was just passing Legere and the last arrivals.

Something smashed heavily on the deck!

Men leaped to startled attention. The reaction to vivid life was terrific. The thing on the deck was a man's body—Sleeth's. It lay still. But young Legere who drove it there was gathering his own great body. He sped through the air lightly. He landed on the thing softly like a panther, and he had the throat clutched in terrible hands, and was shaking it, and mauling its flesh. And he was whimpering and crying, sobbingly, like a very little, unstrung boy: "You cut it, the purse line! And—and St. Anne's could—could have—sunk for all—you'd cared!" It was elemental ferocity uncovered. It was ghastly savagery——

Jo Michelle sprang forward. He clung fast to the boy, deadly calm. He thrust his own face in front of the unseeing blue eyes that blazed palely. "You will kill him!" he protested. No response. Michelle shook him gently.

The convulsing throes ceased; the blazing eyes died down from their glare, grew wondering, almost frightened. David Legere dropped Sleeth's body and cringed away. He took Jo's hand and staggered to his feet. He made the sign of the cross heavily, as though in terror of himself, and reeled away to the forecastle.

The crew relaxed again, grinning their glee. They had been enraptured at it all. It is the way of the sea.

Morning, and the herring swarmed on all the shores. The sea inshore was milky white with their milt. Aft, the captain was counting out money to David Legere. All morning the boy had appeared white, abstracted. He was bewildered; he did not understand it—the terrific thing that had burst forth within him the night before. He was afraid of himself; of what, some day, he might be led to do.

On the deck outside a happy Frenchman was singing fervently:

"Filez, filez, O mon navire,
Car le bonheur m'attend la-bas!"

Across the cabin table the captain smoked in placid content. He pushed forward a pile of bank notes. "You've done well, boy," he said.

David emerged from his spell. His face, now, flushed happily at the meaning of it all. "It is wonderful, m'sieu', the herring!" he said. He nodded back toward the coast. "I am counting on the herring *making* our little country, back there."

The captain was gazing at the eagerness of youth showing in the boy's eyes. "They can do it," he said. "Herring have changed the destiny of more than one little country, my son."

CHAPTER X.

THE "GOLDEN HOPE."

THE very day of his return, David started the building of his weir, and, after twenty years, St. Anne's again opened its eyes to the possibility of a meteoric career.

A half hour after David landed back in St. Anne's the story of his success was on every tongue, and redoubling in scope with every telling. Legere himself gave out little. He only smiled. So they sought Jo Michelle. And Jo? There were times when Jo was devoutly untruthful. It seemed to afford him some vague sort of spiritual adventure to see how far from truth he could stretch his teachings. And the outcome seemed to afford him an almost childish delight, like a boy who might cut up the scriptures to fly high on a kite. So all day Jo grinned in secret. He would find out deftly how much money his questioners thought Legere had made, and then in his reply he would double it. Of course by this process of happy mathematics by nightfall David Legere might have been moving about in a glinting aura of purest gold, with actual Louis d'ors dropping off him.

Dougal McTavish heard with a big and solemn discontent in his heart. Dougal *would*. It was his nature. Tamant Boudreau was honest in his hearty congratulations. Danny Shane thumped David prodigiously on the back, with an apt and picturesque oath of delight. Narcisse

Comeau fixed him with an earnest glance and said quietly: *"Mes felicitations, mon brave,"* and David flushed warmly and almost wrecked the hand Narcisse intrusted in his own. He launched himself into his work that day filled with a happy glow.

IN two weeks the weir, which was to play so vital a part in the history of the village was finished. Its construction had been attended throughout by the greatest interest. The first day, when Jo Michelle and himself had taken their dory at low water and staked out the site, it might have been a town holiday.

The site had been over on the sands at one end of Rocky Channel. Rocky Channel had grown to be as vital a part of David's plans as the herring themselves. It was a peculiar formation, a clean-cut narrow defile running between the bold shore and an outlying strip of rocks. Through this the tide flowed gently to pass out upon the sands beyond, and through this David had seen the young herring pass in dense shoals.

And that first day, too, had come Felix Dorion, suave, unctuous, polished, and his errand had been to buy just this site of Rocky Channel. The incident never ceased to puzzle David deeply. Felix, according to his own statement, had had the purchase of that shore section in mind some time—he had a client for it. And as he talked he emanated a pronounced "breath," which, together with his manner never failed to confuse David; and David finally bowed courteously but firmly and said in response to Felix's questioning: "There is no price on it, m'sieu'. I wouldn't sell it for a million dollars!" But always he had wondered: Who was Felix's client? What did he want of Rocky Channel?

And now the weir was complete. Its great circumference of deep-driven poles, interlaced with brush, showed above the tide at low water in a high circular network wall with a straight wing like a high brush fence running shoreward, emerging on the beach and running up shore above high-water mark. At high tide, when all was submerged, a school of young herring passing through Rocky Channel would encounter the brush fence across their course, would be turned aside and pass on down into the great circular trap beneath the tide.

The finishing touch was hanging the marline—the great net that was to line the walls inside—and late that last day, in the almost unbearable flood of his feelings, David Legere wanted to be alone, to go over it all in his mind again, to work out his dreams farther still.

He struck up the beach to his own place, and up and out upon the high headland overlooking the sea. It was on this headland that he had spent so many hours watching, and studying. He sat down on a rock and gave himself to the things within him. Below, the feathery tops of the tallest weir stakes showed just above the surface, waggling gently in the eddy. All was lifeless and empty down there now, but one day soon the spot would be teeming with life, would be——

SOMETHING distracted him. He turned swiftly.

Graciette Dorion was coming toward him from out the dusk. Even at a distance her coming brought a little tinge of sadness. It always did, somehow.

She sat down beside him in silence, staring straight out into the dimming sea and sky, as though caught herself in some spell.

There was something so appealing in the turn of the little head, something so tender, so moving, in the heavy mass of childlike curls tied away from a too-white neck, in the slim, drooping shoulders, in the delicately rounded arms, that the sea and all within it was for a moment wiped from David's mind, and he did a strange thing—he put a hand awkwardly over hers and said: "I'm glad you have come, Graciette. I—I needed some one."

It was not quite true. It may have been some unaccountable impulse of chivalry, a strong man's instinctive compassion and protectiveness; it may have been that his own happiness and success made him want to pass gladness on to some one else. David

could not have defined it. At any rate, its effect was puzzling.

The little creature turned up to his a face so filled with passionate emotion that it startled him, confused him. And there was some tremendous feeling in her voice and behind her questions, too. "*Me,* David? Do you think you needed—me?"

And after a dazed moment he obeyed the same impulse, and said: "Yes, I think *you,* Graciette. But what is it? What is the matter?"

She was fighting hard to stay miserable tears. "Oh, I wanted to help—some! Every one in the village has had something they could do to help you these past few days, while I, who would like to do so much, could do—nothing."

David was silent. Then he turned to her, smiling gravely. "Well, you know it's the spirit of things that counts. The wanting to help me pleases me as much as really *doing* something."

The girl turned her face back again to the darkening sea, and, as he glanced anxiously at her, David saw two glimmering wet streaks down her face, although it was held rigid, straight before her. His voice came deep, grave. "Graciette, don't! Don't do that!"

SHE began speaking, and her speech was free from emotion. "I can help you some, although"—she seemed speaking to herself—"the good God only knows what I may pay for telling you!" A quiet moment, then: "Saul Budro, the Black One, has been at our house again. He came more than once while you were gone. I am helping you much when I tell you that the man is mad with wrath that you should have built your weir, and I—I fear that my—my stepfather is listening to his plans, for——"

David laughed aloud at her fears. "Why should Saul Budro concern himself about the weir, Graciette? And Felix Dorion—he is a notary and must have many who seek him out on business." His eyes dropped anew to his weir, and his face lit with slow inspiration. He turned and touched her hand again, awkwardly. "Graciette, you *can* help me." He was smiling, now. "The weir must have a name, like the weirs far down the coast. What shall we call it? You shall say!"

Slowly she responded to his mood. She looked down at the weir and a wan little smile struggled through. "Why not call it 'Aladdin's Lamp?' It is going to bring so much." In her starved little life Graciette had managed to steal much from Felix's books.

David laughed uncertainly. It was not just clear what she meant. "No. That is too grand, too fine. Besides, it must be a name all may understand."

The girl considered. Then in sudden loyalty, "Why not 'The Princess Mary?'—you have told me of one down coast called 'The Prince Albert?'"

David was considering, abstractedly. He was thinking of his loyal French father. "I would rather call it 'Le Coq Gaulois!' but that, too, is too fine."

A quiet moment, then Graciette turned an earnest face up to his. "You built it, David, hoping first of all that it would bring you wealth; so let's call it 'The Golden Hope.'"

He stared back at her in dawning appreciation. "'The Golden Hope' it is," he said.

A swift silence fell, a silence in which each was lost in mazes of thought. Then David rose, took Graciette's arm gently to help her also, when—a strange thing—the girl's face went dead white and she cringed away. "Oh, don't," she gasped throatily, as though in physical agony, and, struggling to her feet, she fell against his body, panting, spent.

The young man's face was puzzled and concerned. "What is it, Graciette?" he asked, quickly.

She opened her eyes and tottered erect. "Nothing, David. Just—just my arm and side hurts."

"What's the matter with it?"

She turned away. "I—I fell. Let's go. I will be late."

They passed down from the headland, Graciette toward the village and David on down to look over his boat for the night.

He was thinking of the smuggler across the cove and why the matter of the weir should concern him as Graciette had said. His shoulders squared suddenly. As a child he had always considered the man across the cove an actual consort of the devil himself. He felt much the same about him still, and now he stood a chance of having him for an enemy.

Down on the shore he came upon Jo Michelle, smoking abstractedly and staring across the harbor at Budro's retreat. As usual there was a sort of activity about the place. Lights like slow fireflies stung through the darkness, and the echoes of heavy boots stumbling about in open boats, and the sodden thump-thump of oar strokes.

David spoke. "What do you suppose goes on all the time in that rendezvous, Jo? I'd like once to get a look within." He was surprised at the somber look of sinister feeling that came on the other's face. And he remembered now that he had seen it before.

The answer was an ominous growl. "That day may come, mon ami, and the good God grant I be with you!"

"Jo," asked the boy suddenly, "has the man ever injured you? Have you anything against him?"

Michelle knocked the ashes from his pipe. "Only the fact of his having been born, M'sieu' David!"

They moved homeward. The boy's thought wandered from Jo to Saul Budro, and from Budro to Graciette, and what it was that could have hurt her. Then Jo's remark on leaving him at the road dispelled all else. Jo said: "Herring began breaking water this evening, M'sieu' David. Tomorrow they'll be inshore."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GOLDEN HOPE FISHES.

IT struck the village like a meteor when the great weir "fished" for the first time the next day, even though its ultimate success had been anticipated by every man in the village.

Lying tranced up on the headland, David Legere had seen at last the vanguard of a vast school of tiny flickering fish pass through Rocky Channel and on into the great trap beyond. He sprang to his feet and his course down through the village was like that of a comet; and like a rushing comet did he lead a broadening trail of followers.

It was a noisy, excited crew that swarmed about the outside circumference of the weir at low water when the catch was to be dipped. Within, Legere and Jo Michelle, with one other dory, were functioning steadily in tense silence.

Without, a hoarse gabble of computation began to rage excitedly. It was a day of all days. Time, place, were forgot. No man had thought beyond what he saw, although even then the bright sky of St. Anne's future was growing a cloud. With every silvery netful uproar increased:

"Five hundred barrels!"

"A thousand I tell you!"

"*Mondit!* What to do with them!"

"Gowdy, Doan & Robertson's man, is to ship 'em in salt—make Rooshian sardines of 'em!"

"At a dollar a barrel, too!"

"They say if the run keeps up——"

Dead silence.

The racket ceased as though stifled under a blanket. From out the gray, mysterious buildings across the harbor a swift, silent motor boat had drawn and was sweeping swiftly up to the weir. In the stern sat a man who, even from a distance, chilled from very brutishness. After more than twenty years Saul Budro, gross, black, hairy, had come out of his seclusion to take a hand again in the fortunes of the village.

Inside the weir David's tall young figure towered a moment, rigid as a statue. Jo Michelle kept on, but his face had fallen somber, almost ugly in its sudden transformation.

The newcomer stood on the beach and waited. Standing apart, there was something incongruously magnificent about him, a negative impress—compelling, powerful. Saul Budro impressed one with awe as being a man who jeered at the world,

who jibed at the devil, and who had never considered a God.

The great weir drained of its harvest, the crowd of men stepped ashore, passing the heavy, bunched figure of Budro with mere nods. Then came the young weirman.

Budro raised an imperative hand. "Come here!"

There was a moment's hesitation, and Legere obeyed.

"I'm biddin' for that weir site," Saul said, bluntly.

Into the boy's head had come what Graciette Dorion had told him of Saul Budro a few days ago.

Budro was talking on, making frank mention of his illegal business with the sheer disregard of utter fearlessness. "We outgrew our present quarters some time ago. That channel through the rocks might have been built for just what we want. I've been wantin' it some time, waiting for this crazy weir idea to play out to talk buyin'." Then, as might a man who spat out his one and only figure at a breath. "I'll give you five thousand dollars for it." He subsided, the great scar across his face beginning to show redly.

The two stood looking at each other a tense moment. Then: "It isn't for sale." The young man turned away.

Saul Budro caught his arm, and whirled him about. "Listen," he began in tense fury. "You needn't be hangin' onto it on account of yer blasted meddlin' father's idea of gettin' a railroad down on this coast! We don't want no railroads runnin' down to St. Anne's, understand? Weir or no weir—canneries or no canneries! And there won't be ever! Meanwhile, I want that shore privilege, and am willin' to pay for it!"

The boy stood stock-still. He seemed very fair and white, very young and—clean, beside the other, and now there was a something hard growing in his eyes.

"And I'm telling you this," he returned. "There'll never be so much as a smuggled can of opium pass through that channel, m'sieu', while God lets me live!"

Budro drew back a sudden fist. His scar-slashed face was livid. His boatmate caught him and dragged him to one side in earnest remonstrance. And the boy strode up the beach.

A moment later, in the little Legere kitchen, David was saying to Margaret Legere: "The sea has been good to us this day, mother! M'sieu' Wiggin, the Gowdy, Doan & Robertson buyer, has bought the whole run to ship in salt." He held her off, his happiness beaming shyly in his eyes. "To-day alone pays all the costs, and"—he laughed—"a silk dress for you, and a rocking-chair that swings. And a new stole for Father Andre—a black one for funerals, and a white one for weddings!"

A shade came over Margaret Legere's happy face as she turned away. "Ah, me, Davy Legere. I'm expectin' now it'll be yer own weddin' afore long!"

David Legere flushed. "Not till I find some one to take your place, mother," he laughed. "And they're not livin' in St. Anne's!"

"Ah, well! There'll be many comin' to St. Anne's now. The sea brings ye riches, Davy, lad. Perhaps it can bring ye sweethearts, too!"

There was a knock. Saul Budro's boatmate stood smiling blandly around the threshold. "I just wanted to say that Mr. Budro, here, has a fine new proposition to make about the weir site he's wantin'. He says as how he'll——"

But—surprisingly—his big principal just then stepped swiftly around the corner of the house and pulled him aside. He looked sharply to the young man in the doorway. "I said I *did* want it. But I've changed my mind." Now he was leering oddly, his eyes glinting exultantly under their bushy brows. He seized the other briskly by the arm. "Come on!"

DOWN the yard he turned on his astonished henchman. There was the sinister uplift of a thousand devils in his face. "Proposition, hell!" he scoffed derisively. "There's no use trying to buy a man's dreams, man, with money. I've known

that from the first. But," he grinned evilly, "there's another way. Did ye hear what they was talkin'—what she said about a sweetheart? It come to me then. There's just one thing in the world that'll make this lad fall, and fall hard, but he don't know it. And that"—some great, unholy joy was filling the man—"and that's a *woman!*" A little down the beach, and he added: "You know 'The Eel Pot,' up on the Quebec river front?"

The man grinned back. "Every sailor on the coast knows it."

"Madame Margot Ducharme that runs it is my sister." Saul laughed. "I'm goin' to Quebec this week, and this is what I'm goin' to do. It's the oldest game there is, but it never fails——" He rolled along with his mouth turned to the other's ear.

Behind, in the little kitchen, the boy was saying: "He wants 'The Hope' because he could load and unload his stuff, hidden out of sight in its channel. Besides, I know now that he's afraid if it is a success and the railroad comes, that it will open up St. Anne's and put him out of business."

"Well, don't let anything happen to ye, lad." The woman sighed and shook her head, sadly. "I been thinkin' of your father lately. Ah, Davy, the sea can bring many things—it can bring ye happiness, lad, but it can also bring ye woe."

A flat, harsh outcry racketed up the rocks. Somewhere down the beach a man was laughing crazily.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: There are many "St. Anne's" in eastern Canada. But the St. Anne's of this story is entirely fictional. In fact, in one or two instances the author has localized in this town characteristics of *different* points of the north shore coast.

To be continued in the next issue, out June 20th.

THE UNKINDEST CUT

FRANCE has a new and not altogether gentle indoor sport. It has no special name, but might, for want of a better, be described as character checking. The object of the brutal game of character checking is to tell your friends and neighbors exactly what you think of them. This is rare fun, but the sport ends when your friends and neighbors take their turn at telling what they think of you. It is a Machiavellian conception and it works thus: The Life of the Party—it may be a man or a woman—starts the game by distributing lists of physical and moral qualities. Each player receives a list and is required to score himself on each quality according to his own conception of his desserts. The scoring is by number, from 0 to 20, par being 20. When all have marked their scores and signed their names, the slips are collected and redistributed so that each player receives the score of another. The players then proceed to correct each other's scores. The fun begins when the corrections are completed and the slips returned to their owners. Naturally, care is exercised to conceal the identity of the corrector from the correctee, a precaution which promotes the most irritating candor.

At one such character-checking séance, it is reported, a young gentleman of some consequence in the theatrical life of Paris was handed the list of his betrothed, a young lady of even greater histrionic prominence. When the corrected slip was returned to its ravishing owner she found herself credited with an amended score of 0 for intelligence and 19 for beauty. Not only that, but she recognized the writing of the impertinent annotator.

Instantly she confronted him and rained malediction on his too-candid head. "Insolent!" she cried. "Slanderer!" she screamed. "All is over between us! Never speak to me again! Zero for intelligence I might have forgiven. But nineteen for beauty—*only nineteen!* That I will never pardon!"

Double Camouflage

By Stephen Allen Reynolds

Author of "Men Among Millions," "Not on the Calendar," Etc.

"Hard Luck" McCarty was like a great many of us; he had borrowed so much trouble that he never expected to clear his debts.

HERBERT L. McCARTY, better known throughout the California Sierras as "Hard Luck" McCarty, was honest according to his lights. A fisher of trout in season from the turquoise depths of Lake Tahoe, he had had scruples at first over adopting certain suggestions of the San Francisco wholesaler to whom he shipped his fish.

He had been hooking quite a few "silversides" which fell short an ounce or two of the minimum pound avoirdupois exacted by law, and as he could neither eat all his "shorts" nor market any of them, and as it required the same amount of bait and effort to hook a short as it did a "counter," he had written frankly to his wholesaler of an intention to give up the digging of worms and the chasing of grasshoppers for the benefit of the unmarketable trout which constituted the bulk of his daily catch.

Back came an answer, together with a check for the last shipment. "Don't think of giving up fishing for a job at one of the resorts," the dealer wrote. "I'm getting from six bits to a dollar a pound for Tahoe trout right along—could sell a ton a day if I had 'em. From now on I'll pay you four bits a pound. Weigh your shorts carefully and poke enough sand down their throats to make up the ounces lacking. The inspectors don't use the X-ray, and if you ain't caught in the act of stuffing 'em nobody can prove that the trout didn't swallow the sand. You keep on fishing."

During the progress of his semiweekly shave Hard Luck mulled over the problem. If he billed the fish strictly according to their net weight, making no charge for the sand, surely it would be a decent transaction. State laws and municipal-market regulations had no right to step in between a workingman and his bread and butter.

Reasoning thus, Hard Luck swept clean

his grizzled jaw and grinned at the reflection in the bit of mirror nailed to the giant tamarack near his cabin door.

Next day, after eight hours on the lake, he stuffed his shorts with black sand from the creek bed hard by the cabin. Little flakes and particles of yellow matter glittered in the sun of high noon, and the lank fisherman with good-natured crinkles around his blue-gray eyes smiled as he meditated on the golden specks. He knew it to be mica and dross—verily "fool's gold."

The sunken-sided pit in the creek fifty yards from the lake shore, the rust-eaten shovel and fragment of a prospector's gold pan, were monuments to the folly and credulity of some ignorant gold seeker of a generation long past.

His stuffing and weighing at an end, Hard Luck scribbled an entry in a notebook. From a clump of willows he then stripped a pile of narrow green leaves and dampened them with cool water. Alternately he packed layers of leaves and trout within a clean grain sack and wired a printed tag to its lashed mouth.

As he rowed the short mile from his beach to the pier where the afternoon steamer touched, McCarty experienced a sensation rather strange to him. It was as if an unseen eye were watching him and probing the hidden grit inside the sack.

As the distance between the rower and the pier at State Line decreased, the nervous tension tightened and Hard Luck lay on his oars. For fully five minutes the boat and its occupant floated near where an imaginary line separates the States of Nevada and California.

McCarty stared hard across the foot of the lake to where Mount Tallac thrust its conifered bulk against the June sky. Little stripes and patches of white stood out sharply against the dull green of the distant pines, marking ravine and "draw" where the winter's snow still clung. But McCarty had no eye at the moment for the artistic contrasts of nature. He was concerned only with the ethics and probabilities attached to the marketing of sand-stuffed trout.

At length he salved his conscience. "I ain't sellin' sand," he repeated aloud. "And if they don't catch me in the act they can't do nothin'."

With which he bent to his oars, met the steamer, and exchanged his burden for a purser's receipt.

LATE that night Hard Luck laid aside the Sacramento paper and blew out his lantern. Wearily, his fifty-nine years pressing heavily on him, he sought his bunk and tried to sleep. But it seemed useless, for despite the lateness of the hour and the fatigue of the day, sleep would not come to him.

Hour after hour he lay open eyed, staring up at the dim outlines of the sagging rafters of the old cabin. Thoughts of the sanded fish, transferred to rail at Truckee and now rolling down the opposite slope of the Sierras, stabbed him recurrently and made him realize that a second fear had come into his life.

The first fear was one that he had been told he would bear until the grave closed over his iron-gray head. It was vague, its origin all but obscured and lost in the maze of vanished years. The facts of the case were that Hard Luck had once unintentionally killed a Chinese and feared revenge at the hands of his relatives or connections.

In the S. P. roundhouse at El Paso, McCarty had been employed as engine wiper at the time. Came a pay-day evening when at a faro table in the Strayhorn a Chinese picked up McCarty's winning bet on the king "open." Words followed. The heavy fist of the railroader lashed out and sent the yellow man crashing into an adjoining game.

"Broken neck," a doctor said tersely when he viewed the body laid out on the green cloth of a crap table.

Texas knew Hard Luck no more. He was no coward, but he feared a shot from ambush, a stab in the dark. Thenceforth he shunned Chinese and the towns which tolerated their settlements.

For years he drove a "six" team on the mesas of Arizona, freighting between the

Mormon colonies in the San Simon and the mining towns below. A period of lumbering followed, ending with the hiring of a Chinese cook.

Itching feet and the lure of the uplands drove Hard Luck to the Sierras of California; and with the viewing of Tahoe and the discovery of an abandoned cabin, the wanderer believed that his fruitless roving had come to an end.

Thenceforth for a decade he had trapped winters and fished summers, his life undisturbed save by recollections of a saffron face and clipped head pillowed on the green baize of a gaming table. Few Chinese had crossed his trail since the era of peace had begun with the finding of the cabin, and these kept to the Lincoln Highway, a mile from McCarty's beach, flivvering their inoffensive ways back and forth between Placerville and Carson City.

Had the lonely man but known that the very cabin which sheltered him had been built by the yellow hands of one Gup Jung Moy before a wave of racial hatred had swept the country between Virginia City and Sacramento clean of Chinese, such knowledge would not have added to his peace of mind.

Yet such was the fact. In the days when freighters for the Comstock Lode toiled painfully up the Californian slope of the Sierras, and with screeching and smoking brakes coasted down grade and around the foot of blue Tahoe, old Gup Jung Moy built his cabin within pistol shot of the trail. And there he delved in the deceitful sands until driven away.

If he found anything worth digging for, he told no man. If in time he learned that the glittering specks were but dross and without value, he complained to no one.

But it is a matter of record that during the late '70s and early '80s Gup Jung Moy was a dealer in medicines and rare and costly roots in San Francisco's Chinatown. He married. Later his children married. And before the breath of life departed from him he lived long enough to celebrate the birth of his only grandchild, one Hip Moy.

This then, was the history of the cabin which had become the home and shelter of the trapper and fisher of trout—and a scrap of the history of its builder.

GOW LOON, official killer of the Bin Gong Tong, wiped his knife on the blouse of the dead man and slipped noiselessly to the window. He parted the cheap lace curtains and peered out.

All was quiet in Spofford Alley. Overhead the new moon floated serenely, a curved thread of silver against the deep purple of the night sky. A policeman sauntered lazily along the sidewalk opposite, kicking now and then at bits of red placard fallen from the dead wall between the jewelry shop of Lee Kee and the basement of Bo Kay of the fragrant name, mender of dominoes and opium pipes.

All seemed tranquil at the moment in that part of San Francisco's Chinatown, and the murderer was satisfied that the dying scream of his victim had alarmed no one in the alley.

Again Gow Loon crossed the room and stared down on the dead man. The features of Hip Moy, dealer in roots and herbs, were not pleasant to look upon. An agonized death was written on them.

The killer glanced quickly from the twisted mouth to the hand on which a valuable bit of jade glinted dully in the gaslight. Soon the ring was his. A vest pocket yielded an expensive watch and fob of gold; the trouser pockets a bunch of keys and a few coins.

These were Gow Loon's perquisites, aside from his usual fee. It remained for him to see if the keys by any chance fitted the safe in the corner of the shop below, or if further loot required the knowledge of a combination.

One final glance at the body stretched on the matting and Gow Loon turned down the gas until a mere pin point of flame illumined the dusk at the head of the stairs.

The shop was in darkness, the curtains drawn, but the killer's flash light helped him down a shelved aisle to the corner where the safe stood. It was an old-fashioned receptacle, fireproof perhaps

rather than thief proof, and the door opened with the insertion of the first key tried. A glass jar crammed with roots of value, a little pile of books, a closed drawer, greeted the searching eyes of the tongman.

Gow Loon slid out the drawer and pocketed the three gold coins and filigreed chain it held. Contemptuously he pawed the books of accounts and was about to rise when a column of ideographs brushed on the page of a slim book yellow with age caught and held his attention.

It was a sort of diary. It promised to be of more than passing interest. Thrusting it in his pocket, the killer moved silently toward the shutters of a rear window affording access to a tiny yard, and within two minutes was walking boldly up Grant Avenue.

The lights of the thoroughfare showed no speck of blood or trace of guilt on the ultra-modish clothing or boyish countenance of the murderer as with a light word he greeted the proprietor of an all-night cigar stand and jauntily entered a telephone booth.

"China; four, flive, seben, thlee," he called; and when his party answered, reported that certain rice had been well cooked, and that he would be found in his room if needed further.

From the booth in the cigar store Gow Loon departed, well satisfied with himself and the deed of the night. He was at least seven hundred dollars richer than he had been that morning, although these earnings must support him until more killing orders should reach him through the council of the Bin Gongs.

He knew very little concerning the Hip Moy affair, but believed it had to do with a young and fascinating slave girl now in the custody of the Presbyterian Mission up the hill. Whether the bachelor dealer in roots and herbs had coveted the girl for himself, whether or not he had babbled to the police, Gow Loon knew not and cared less. At his ease, over pork with green peppers and noodles, he dismissed the affair and sat in an obscure restaurant until three in the morning.

IT was neither the food nor the steaming bowls of tea which held him riveted to his stool for two hours. It was the contents of the diary which had come to him from the safe of the dead man. Twice through Gow Loon read the thin but tough pages, and marveled at what he learned.

Vaguely the tongman knew this country of the Sierras of Nevada and California. He had once journeyed to Truckee to slay an embezzling informer of his race who had fled from San José. And at Quincy, in these same Sierra's, his knife had sapped the lifeblood of a laundryman who refused tribute to the council of his "company."

He knew Sacramento and Placerville, stepping-stones to the crossing of the mountains, and as he sat over his last bowl of fragrant Long Soo, Gow Loon came to a decision.

Early the next morning he arose and collected the balance of his fee from the round-faced and eminently respectable poultry dealer who presided over the treasury of the Bin Gongs; then he equipped himself for a protracted absence. With ample cash in a money belt, his keen and trusty knife accompanying a blued automatic, .38 in caliber, the diary on his person, Gow Loon crossed the ferry to Oakland and took train to Sacramento.

Inconspicuous, huddled in the rear seat of the auto stage which connected with his train, the killer was borne upward along the modernized Emigrant Trail. At Placerville, marked "Hangtown" on the old maps, and so indicated in the diary in his pocket, Gow Loon sought the shop of a countryman owing allegiance to the Bin Gongs. Over a bowl of tea he conversed, mostly in monosyllables, then hastened to resume his seat in the stage.

Refreshed by rest and lunch, the driver pressed on along the historic highway, through Camino and Pacific House, past Strawberry and up the steep Slippery Ford Grade.

A brief stop to cool the overheated motor, then the summit was gained and the coasting of the far slope begun. Exactly on time the stage drew up at Bijou

and was surrounded by a swarm of campers eager for papers and mail.

Gow Loon slipped through the crowd and stood for some moments eying the sparkling waters of the lake. Up to the northward and westward, past Mount Rubicon and Twin Peaks, the July sun was drawing near the notched horizon.

But Gow Loon had no interest in this shore. Instead he scanned the eastern shore and tried to distinguish a point "three miles from the foot of the lake called Ta Ho, where a rivulet of fresh water empties from the eastward, and where, fifty paces from the water level, two giant trees of soft pine interlock branches within a hundred feet of the cabin I builded of stout logs."

As the sun sank and the chill of evening heralded the nightly bonfires of the campers, Gow Loon purchased modestly at the local store; and with bread, tinned salmon and matches added to his possessions, disappeared along the eastern beach.

It was hard going in the loose sand, and the killer discovered that the walking was better close to the water line. Like a shadow he slipped through the piling of the pier at State Line, and when his judgment told him he had covered three miles, he made camp for the night.

The light overcoat he carried proved inadequate against the chill of that altitude, but pine cones and fallen timber were found in abundance just back of the beach. So alternately dozing and pricked awake to tend his small fire, Gow Loon spent the night.

THE last owl hooted, the boldest coyote slunk to its den, and the sky above Daggett's Pass became tinged with orange and palest gold. Gow Loon arose and stretched his stiffened limbs. After a sandwich of salmon and a long drink at the brim of the mirrorlike lake, he rolled a cigarette and took note of his surroundings.

No giant pines were in sight in the faint light of dawn, but as the killer moved slowly along the Nevada shore he came within a few minutes to a slough where a thin stream covered with a film of yellowish-green tamarack pollen trickled into the lake. And fifty paces back, two enormous stumps were monuments to lumbering operations and the passage of years.

"Hai!" Gow Loon murmured, and passed cautiously upstream and through a growth of young pine.

Presently a cabin appeared, a gray blotch against the cool green of the second-growth timber. And even as the seeker looked he saw smoke begin to pour from its chimney.

With the increasing light, Gow Loon noted that a well-trodden path was close at hand. At the beach end of it, a short cut from the meandering bed of the slough, he made out a small landing pier and a boat moored close to it. At the cabin end the path became a broad and rutted trail, winding its way to the eastward through sparsely timbered meadows.

The smoke meant that the cabin was occupied. It spelled danger to the plans of the tongman and forthwith he adopted the tactics of an Indian.

From tree to tree he moved until he found a point of vantage in an elevated spot fringed with sagebrush high enough to conceal him when he stooped; and there he lay, a hundred yards distant from the cabin. Now he could see a wheelbarrow, the rear end of a flivver fitted with what was evidently a sort of semiexpress body.

Almost beneath him on the near bank of the shallow creek, Gow Loon saw a pit in the black sand so different from the yellow sand of the beach. The depression, although drifted over in part, was plainly marked, and at one end of it the tongman thought he could perceive some rusted fragments of metal.

"Hai!" he breathed, an exultant gleam in his brown eyes; but immediately his attention was drawn to the cabin.

For the door had opened, and there stood framed in the casing of peeled logs the lank form of a tall man well past the prime of life. For an instant or two the cabin's occupant stood surveying the risen sun, then he strode to a bench under a tree to which a bit of mirror was nailed.

There he washed and toweled himself vigorously before disappearing again within the cabin.

For an hour Gow Loon lingered in ambush, tantalized by tempting odors which floated to his nostrils. He saw in fancy the man at table eating fish and delicately browned strips of bacon. In reality he saw Hard Luck McCarty throw out his dishwater and gather his bait and heavy reel of fishing gear preparatory to the day's work. And scarcely was his boat a hundred yards offshore before Gow Loon had descended and satisfied himself that the tall man lived alone.

In the course of the three days which followed, Gow Loon satisfied himself in other respects. By dint of judicious inquiry in Bijou and at near-by resorts, while masquerading as a valet in search of work, he learned that Hard Luck McCarty lived practically the life of a recluse. He had no friends or intimates, no relatives as far as known; and the cabin in which he squatted being somewhat off the beaten trails, few if any visitors.

In short, H. L. McCarty was a man who would scarcely be missed, particularly during the brief boating and bathing season when the natives were busy gathering profits to tide them over the snow-bound winter. And if he *were* missed, an inquiry instituted, and a strange Chinese found occupying the cabin, it would be the most natural explanation in the world for the latter to say smilingly that Mr. McCarty had gone to Los Angeles on a rather unexpected business trip, and the new occupant had appeared on the scene just in time to be of service as caretaker at small pay.

Thus reasoned Gow Loon, the killer, as on the morning of the fourth day he crammed fresh cartridges into the magazine of his .38, and crept in stocking feet from the elevation screened by sagebrush to the shelter of a woodpile a scant ten yards from McCarty's door.

And there he lay, patient and stoic, though chilled to the bone, awaiting the rising of the sun and the opening of the door.

MR. BENJAMIN LEWERS, aboard the Sausalito ferry, bound for San Francisco, scowled through the wind shield of his three-thousand-dollar Sport Six at the rapidly nearing lights at the foot of Market Street. His over-the-Fourth escape from the cares of business had by no means been a complete success, for he was returning from the Lake Region north of Santa Rosa with nary a trout to show his partner or his wife.

The fish dinner he had promised to give on the evening of the fifth would have to be postponed. Clara, who preferred bridge or mah jong to sunburn, would smile that supercilious smile of hers; and fat Murgatroyd's paunch would quiver as he'd chuckle disbelievingly over the story of "the six-pounder that flopped out of the landing net."

Benjamin was hungry and tired in the bargain. Clara would no doubt be out for the evening among her Chinese-domino fiends, the maid would probably be off for the nightly fox-trotting at North Beach, so unless he chose to ransack the ice box of a deserted apartment it behooved him to stop elsewhere for supper.

This was no punishment, for in his bachelor days Ben Lewers had discovered a grill where every morsel was deliciously cooked to a turn. Each chop and steak was pedigreed, as it were; and at the long bare counter facing the charcoal fires of the open grill where white-clad chefs labored lovingly, one would find some of the best people in the city perched expectantly or contentedly atop the humble stools.

Women were not admitted to "Coffee Harry's" Grill, otherwise Ben Lewers would have brought Clara around to it quite frequently. Now, fishless and hungry, he drove there and parked his car near the bright lights of Powell and Geary.

Coffee Harry, like the celebrated John Brown, had been dead for many years, but his name went marching on and had been inherited by the sharp-eyed manager who now watched the door for the possible entrance of women or "prohi's," alike unwelcome.

Lewers nodded to "Harry the Fifth" and found a vacant stool. Over a high ball of good Scotch masquerading in a coffee cup, Ben tugged his neatly trimmed mustache and studied the elaborate menu. He had about decided on a double T-bone Bordelaise, flanked with deep-dish strawberry pie, when he stiffened at the sight of a slip pasted across the bottom of the menu card.

"Special To-day," it announced. "Lake Tahoe Trout—$1.25."

Benjamin Lewers was a person of probity and position, yet not above the practicing of a mild deception which could harm no one. To his resourceful brain there came a plan to save his face and give that fish dinner after all.

Most sumptuously he dined, and after a conference with the manager, adjourned to the grill's refrigerator and made certain selections. While the trout were being strung on a bit of cord and placed in a damp sack, Ben changed his mind and had a second cup of coffee "Royaled" with Sonoma County brandy.

All was now Jake—whoever Jake is or was—and life was really worth while.

"One big one, and four one pounders," he boasted proudly to his partner next morning, and silently blessed the house of Coffee Harry.

That afternoon, home early to attend to the details of the trout banquet and summoned to the kitchen by a mildly excited maid, Ben stared incredulously at the fat fillets of black sand imbedded like roe in the interiors of three of his fish. Bending for a closer inspection he noted flakes and particles of yellow matter which glinted dully against the dark sand.

"Looks like gold," he agreed with the maid, "but how in the name of time those trout gobbled up all that sand is beyond me."

An inquisitive person along certain lines, never overlooking a bet, Benjamin Lewers saved a generous sample of the sand, and next day at noon called up Coffee Harry's and learned where the sand-bearing trout had been purchased. Within the space of ten minutes he was having a heart-to-heart talk with the wholesale fishman who bought and dispensed Hard Luck McCarty's product.

He was a jolly person, this merchant, and his explanation was punctuated with chuckles.

"Trout are running small this year," he said, "and nobody knows why. They're scarce, at that, particularly Lake Tahoe silversides. If it wasn't for an ounce or two of camouflage to get by the regulations the fishermen would quit and we city people wouldn't get a smell. If we *did*, the few big ones would run somewheres around a dollar a smell."

"Do you mind telling me who ships to you from Lake Tahoe?" Ben asked. He supplemented his inquiry with the presentation of one of his business cards, and as the fish merchant still hesitated he let drop some remarks which led the former to infer that he craved to do a little Tahoe fishing in person, and needed a guide to the best grounds.

In the end he had his information; the only Tahoe fisherman who shipped regularly was one McCarty who lived somewhere near the pier at State Line, a mile or two beyond Bijou. The trout supplied to the grill of Coffee Harry two days previously were of this same McCarty's catch.

Well satisfied so far, Ben Lewers hastened back to his office and spent the better part of twenty minutes closeted with his partner.

"Maybe so; maybe so," Murgatroyd, always conservative, agreed in part. He blinked thoughtfully, twiddled his thumbs above fingers interlocked across his ample paunch, then added: "But if you don't get anything definite I wouldn't waste too much time over it. We're behind in our work as it is."

ONE telephone call to his apartment, another to the garage where the Sport Six was kept, and Ben Lewers was on his way. The ferry transfers to Oakland and across Carquinez were tedious, but once he was straightened out on the road to Sacramento the engine of the low-

slung car began the humming of its mile-eating refrain.

A brief stop in the capital city for gas and oil, and Ben pressed on toward Placerville and beyond, steering with one hand while he negotiated a double sandwich with the other.

Night fell. The drum lights sent twin cones of radiance ahead, shedding light on pine and rock and curve. The air grew chill, actually became cold, forcing the driver to dig out and don a chamois-lined topcoat of khaki-colored gaberdine. Now snug and warm, Ben climbed to the summit, the wide-open cut-out of his exhaust roaring defiance at the danger and darkness of night.

Long before dawn he drew into Bijou, and by good luck found a weary mechanic finishing up an all-night job of towing in a wreck from the Kingsbury Grade. Lewers approached and put his question.

"Sure I know him," the grimy one said with that degree of deference usually accorded by garage folk to the drivers of costly cars. "Just keep on along the highway for a couple o' miles and watch on the left for a gate with a big red advertisin' sign nailed to the post.

"McCarty's cabin lies a mile down the trail from the gate, a few yards from the lake beach. And you'd better look over a little bridge not far beyond the gate. Last time I was down that way it didn't look any too good to me for anything heavier'n a flivver."

Ben thanked the man and looked with longing on the closed doors of the shop and eating pavilions. There was no chance for coffee at that hour. Reluctantly he climbed into his seat and rolled slowly away through the thick dust of an abused road.

Through the little cluster of cabins at Lakeside and State Line, the pier and buildings ghostly in the hour before dawn, the Sport Six snorted its way. There the highway left the lake shore and drew nearer the mountains intervening between Carson Valley. Giant pines and other conifers now hedged the road and left it in a blackness approaching the absolute, but shortly Ben's spotlight picked out a gate and sign, the latter proclaiming "The best coffee in the world."

"Wouldn't mind a cup of it right now," Lewers mused as he struggled with the heavy gate.

He worked the car through, and slowly along the dusty trail. Soon came the bridge across a shallow creek. Ben inspected the humble structure, to shake his head dubiously at the half-rotten timbers. The light of his pocket torch showed no practicable way around, and rather than risk broken springs and axles in a possible four-foot drop through the bridge, Ben decided to continue on afoot.

He switched off lights and ignition and fished in the crevice at the right of the driver's cushion for his revolver. He pocketed the weapon, then, after a glance at the lighter hue spreading over the serrated horizon to the eastward, he crossed the doubtful bridge and proceeded on along the trail.

It grew lighter rapidly. Monument Peak, miles distant beyond the foot of the lake, became tipped with gold. Ben snapped off his flash light. He crossed a meadow where cattle were nosing disconsolately in the brown stubble, and came now into grove after grove of second-growth pine.

The rutted trail wound its way along the bank of the creek. Carpeted thickly with pine needles, it cushioned the steps of the visitor.

Came a clearing, the outlines of a cabin flanked by a woodpile—and Ben Lewers ceased his noiseless approach and stood stiff in his tracks.

FOR he had seen an object move stealthily toward the woodpile. The light was too dim, the distance too great, for him to distinguish whether it was man or animal, but the nature of the movement was unmistakable. It was the stealthy glide of a beast of prey.

Lewers knew his Sierras, and knew that mountain lions and other dangerous carnivora might be encountered in that locality. A reassuring touch on the stock of his

revolver, and he crept behind a convenient tree.

Mount Rubicon, across the lake, became violet rather than purple, and the sky above the invisible Carson Valley was ablaze with the light of imminent dawn. Now Lewers saw that it was a man behind the woodpile; and as it grew lighter still and he stole closer, he fancied it was either a Chinese or a Japanese who watched the cabin.

At length the sun burst into view. Its light bathed the dancing waters of the lake and drew a gleam from some metal object in the hand of the man behind the woodpile. A blue spiral circled lazily from the chimney of the cabin. The arm of the nearer watcher was lifted and extended along the topmost tier of wood.

Fifty yards or so intervened between Benjamin Lewers and the woodpile. Save for clumps of sagebrush it was bare of growth. But the dry, deep sand of a beach of prehistoric date muffled the sound of his footsteps as with ready weapon he advanced to take a hand in this game of probable ambush and murder.

Thirty of the yards were covered, when the cabin door swung open and a tall man stepped forth—to be greeted with two pistol shots which rang out as one. A pane of glass in the two-by-three window to the right of the door fell tinkling to the floor of the cabin; while Gow Loon crumpled into an awkward posture, a small hole visible just behind the lobe of his right ear.

FOR twenty-four hours Hard Luck had been worrying over the matter of a strange Chinese reported lurking in the vicinity. The express agent at State Line had inquired of him what the yellow man was doing down near his beach, and he had had a personal glimpse of the fellow during his last trout-shipping trip.

He had been doubly watchful thereafter, had slept with barred door and a gunny sack nailed over the single window of the cabin; and now as he stepped forth from his doorway, a cocked .45 in hand, it was to glimpse the falling of the Chinese and the advance of a stern-looking stranger wearing a khaki-colored overcoat.

All "prohi" officers and government sleuths wore khaki, according to the belief held by McCarty, and he paused not to analyze the situation. As the stranger advanced and prodded the dead man with his foot before stooping to relieve the stiffening fingers of the automatic, Hard Luck sprang to the seat of his flivver and pulled out the priming rod. The battery, despite the chill of the morning, acted well, and to the thrust of his heel on the starting button the engine coughed vigorously.

"Hey, there!" Benjamin Lewers called, advancing on the timid one.

But McCarty waved him away.

"I want to talk to you about that sand," Ben pleaded loudly, ignoring the flourishing of the long-barreled .45.

Hard Luck, thoroughly rattled now as he caught the words barely audible above the growing roar of his engine, went into first speed with a vicious thrust of his foot. The flivver, complaining in every rod and timber, lurched away and disappeared around the first turn in the trail.

"The blamed fool!" Lewers grunted, and took up the pursuit on foot.

It was a long mile to the gate at the highway, but the puffing runner congratulated himself on the fact that his own car was parked this side of it. And the Sport Six could run circles around the fastest flivver ever turned out.

Breathless, but by no means downcast, Ben trotted across the rotten bridge and flung himself into his machine. The engine purred sweetly to his touches, then snarled as he backed into the brush to make the turn.

An examination of the dust at the gate showed that McCarty had turned toward the left. Ben Lewers resumed his seat, and with a grin, put on all the speed he dared. His speedometer had crept to 42, his engine had warmed to the mile-eating roar of the exhaust, when around a bend in the dusty road he caught sight of McCarty's car. And the fugitive was slowing up.

Onward rolled the Sport Six—to be halted by stern-looking men wearing silver badges. There was a bar across the road, a wet and slimy platform at one side of it, and an evil odor in the air. And as Lewers, mildly surprised, eyed his surroundings, he was astonished to see the bar withdrawn and McCarty let through without formality.

"What's all this?" Ben demanded of the sunburned man with the notebook and pencil who stood before his radiator blocking the way.

"Nevada quarantine station," was the gruff reply. "You've got to be sprayed afore you can go through."

"How come you play favorites and let that bird through?" Ben asked. He remembered now that Arizona and Nevada were quarantining against epizoötic rampant in California. Doubtless these men were acting well within their rights. Yet McCarty's escape puzzled him.

"We're not sprayin' cars that have a Nevada license," the man in charge explained, "not unless they've traveled east over the mountains. That's Hard Luck McCarty that just went through. His cabin's on the Nevada side o' the line, although the trail to it cuts in off the California side. Now if you'll just work your machine up on this platform, mister, we won't detain you longer'n we have to."

They sprayed Ben's running boards and undergear with a milky fluid which smelled to the heavens. He was compelled to step out and into a box of sawdust saturated with that same fluid. And after the glueing of a certificate attesting the purity of the car and its occupant to the wind shield, the Californian was free to go.

Fifteen valuable minutes had been lost.

It is three miles up the difficult and slightly traveled Kingsbury Grade from the Lake Tahoe level to the summit, and five sharp descending miles down its farther side to the floor of Carson Valley. It is a mountain road avoided by all save the skilled motorist and the plumb foolish who attempt it with overloaded and underbraked machines.

Off the main highway and up the Kingsbury Grade the squeegee-treaded tires of McCarty's flivver left tracks plain to follow. Up to the summit roared the Sport Six.

A little gasp came from Ben Lewers as he viewed the panorama spread out at his feet, but soon the wickedly descending road demanded his undivided attention. He cut off the ignition, he marveled that second-speed compression was insufficient to hold the car, and went into first.

There are nine more-or-less hairpin curves on the eastern side of the Kingsbury Grade, and on the fourth of these Ben caught sight of the fleeing McCarty. The fisherman was fully a thousand feet below him, and coasting rapidly around turns which a car of longer wheel base dare not attempt to negotiate at equal speed.

It was tantalizing, but Lewers grinned as he thought of the level reaches on the valley floor. His Sport Six had once attained seventy-eight. So around and around the dizzy turns he tooled the car, pedaling alternately at clutch and brake, anticipating an early ending of the chase.

IT came earlier than he expected, for as he rounded the seventh hairpin turn he had to step hard on his foot brake to avoid crashing into a broken-springed flivver which stood lopsided fairly in the middle of the road, its radiator resting flatly on the front axle.

"I defy you to take me in Nevada," were the first words of the tall man who stepped out boldly from behind the far side of the wreck.

Ben Lewers made no immediate reply. Instead he set his emergency brake and fumbled in a vest pocket. From it he took two cigars, one of which he extended to the surprised McCarty.

If "music hath charms," et cetera, likewise has good tobacco. Hard Luck smoked and listened; and the longer he listened to this wholesome, fair-speaking man with the pleasant brown eyes, the more he warmed to him.

"It's all right about my title to the cabin and ten acres," he said at length. "I've

held squatter's rights for years, and I've been payin' taxes over at the county seat these last five years. But I wouldn't want you to be fooled about those specks in the sand. It ain't nothin' but mica an bits o' pyrites. It's 'fool's gold,' as they call it, an' I wouldn't rest easy sellin' out for big money you hint at."

"You never took the trouble to have a sample of that sand assayed?" Lewers assumed.

McCarty shook his iron-gray head. "No," he said, "I'm a bit of a miner myself. I panned dozens o' samples from all over that creek bed, an' didn't even get a color."

"Ever use mercury?"

Again Hard Luck shook his head and watched while the other produced a business card and passed it over to him. Wonderingly he read:

MURGATROYD & LEWERS
Assayers and Refiners
SAN FRANCISCO.

"I'M Benjamin Lewers," the erstwhile pursuer said, "and I've made a personal examination of that trout stuffing of yours. It's rotten, so to speak, with 'flour gold' too fine to pan. And now I want to make some kind of a fair-and-square arrangement with you. If the deposit is extensive, you'll never have to fish again unless you feel you have to."

"You're on," McCarty agreed.

"A HUNDRED and eighteen a ton," fat Murgatroyd beamed some two weeks later as he fingered the smelter report from the Little Trout project.

"And near a thousand tons in sight," Lewers supplemented.

Hard Luck, resplendent in a straw hat, a new suit, and boots which creaked when he walked, thumbed the pages of a translation made from a thin book taken from the dead body of Gow Loon.

"With much patience and mercury," he read, "one may redeem from the black sand its finely milled gold. As a father clings to his first-born son, so clings the gold flour to the mercury, after which the mercury may be burned away by the placing of the mixture in an iron vessel and over a fire. The visible particles of yellow in the black sand are of no value, although they have misled thousands of the white men who have been pouring into this country from the eastward.

"The knowing ones laugh at me when they penetrate from the traveled trail I have described to my cabin near the beach of the lake Ta Ho, but I, Gup Jung Moy, am happy when in the lone watches of the night and no eyes are near I burn the mercury from the pannings of the day and behold the precious product. Each day I praise my Maker for his goodness and charity, thanking the Veiled Hand that leads me by devious paths to Fortune."

At a question from Lewers, Mr. Herbert L. McCarty looked up from the typed sheets.

"What do you think of that foxy old chink?" Ben repeated.

Hard Luck, in hard luck no longer, pointed to the concluding lines of the last paragraph he had read.

"I think," he said, "old Gup Jung Moy wrote a mouthful. In them lines he expresses my exact sentiments."

THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY

THERE are some ancient desks on the floor of the United States Senate. For instance, Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi uses the desk at which Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, sat as a senator. The late Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, had the one at which Charles Sumner sat.

The Baby of the Family

By Caroline Lockhart

Author of "In the White Man's Way," "As Meek as Monk," Etc.

Jim and Elmer were brothers. But that was as far as the relationship went. In all but blood they were as distant as the poles.

JIM MACOMBER sat with a rapt expression on his plain, tanned face, listening to the record which the small phonograph at his elbow was playing. He was transported; he felt as if he were floating on a rosy cloud in the blue ether as, with parted lips and eyes fixed unseeingly upon the misty peaks of the Big Horn Mountains framed in the doorway of his homestead cabin, he drank in the music.

Macomber could not have described his sensations in a thousand years; he had the limited vocabulary of the old-time cowboy and as near as he could come to it in his own mind was that it was like the effect of the second drink of good liquor.

The sobbing violin which made his soul vibrate died away. He drew a deep breath as it ended and jumped to his feet to lift the needle from the record before it started scratching.

"Gosh! I love flowers and music," he said aloud in a voice which was husky with feeling.

This was his favorite, "The Herd Girl's Dream," by August Labitzky, played by a violin, flute and harp trio, and now to be sure that no harm could come to it he wrapped it in a piece of clean flour sack before laying it back in the box with the half dozen other records which composed his small collection.

When he had closed the machine he walked to the doorway where he stood looking off across the cañon to the tar-paper roof of a homestead cabin on the other side which belonged to his nearest neighbors, the Edwards family.

For some inexplicable reason he always thought of Nellie Edwards when he played this record. She was not a "herd girl," for, thank heavens, there were no sheep in that section, but she rode the hills and coulees daily looking after her father's small herd of horses. She was straight

and slim as a boy and he admired her horsemanship greatly, as well as her good sense, courage and candor.

When he had worked for the Arrowhead outfit he had ridden over often for Sunday dinner, but since taking up a homestead his visits had not been frequent owing to the fact that it was a twenty-mile ride each way, a deep cañon with nearly perpendicular walls intervening for that distance. It was only five miles across as the crow flies, and the tar-paper roof was sometimes a tantalizing sight to the homesteader when satiated with his own society.

Such times were few, however, as he had been either too busy or too tired to be lonely since filing on his six hundred and forty acres in this isolated and well-nigh inaccessible spot among the forbidding mountains and cañons of northern Wyoming.

No one but Jim Macomber, or another who has built up a ranch in a rough country a long distance from a railroad, could appreciate the toil which the twelve-by-fourteen cabin represented. It was especially hard for Macomber, who had been in the saddle all his life and was unaccustomed to this plodding kind of manual labor.

He had cut and dragged the big house logs down the steep, boulder-strewn sides of a mountain with a pair of mules too light for the work and aggravating as to disposition. He had hewn and put up the heavy logs unaided, split the poles for the roof, which was still unfinished, and done his own cooking and bread making. He fell into his blankets at night almost too tired to remove his clothing and was up again at daylight hunting his mules and horses.

But he had never faltered in his determination to develop a ranch from his homestead, and he had worked on since early spring, permitting himself no rest or relaxation save the rare visits to his neighbors, and moments like the present when he sat down to play the phonograph and gave himself up to the ecstasy of listening to his beloved records.

NOW his eyes came back from the Edwards' cabin to the valley spread out before him, and, as always when he looked at it, his face lighted with an immense satisfaction. He said aloud in his gentle drawl, which had a peculiar, minor note in it:

"This is shore a beau-ti-ful place, hombre, and I shore got my neck bowed to make a ranch of it!"

His checked flannel shirt was soiled and ragged, his overalls faded into streaks of white and pale blue from frequent washings, the high heels of his cowboy boots, with their ornate tops, were badly run over, but he felt a monarch as he lifted his chin with the pride which swelled in him as he gazed at his holdings.

"Maybe this ain't a grass country! Look at that bluestem wavin' like the ocean when the wind blows over it! I could cut enough hay to winter a world of cattle if I just had a new wheel for my mower and somebody to help me.

"Gee, this is livin'! All my life I been turned out like a old saddle horse when folks was done with him; but no more workin' for wages for James F. Macomber! I'm my own boss—sabe?

"If the outfits want these snaffle-bit cowboys at forty dollars per—let 'em. I'm done with 'em. Sixteen head of cattle, six horses and two Democrats"—he smiled as he thought of his mules, Jinny and Sassafras—"is a good little start in any man's country."

He turned and gazed around his cabin, continuing his rhapsody:

"It looks like home a'ready—durned if it don't! All it needs is a floor, and a roof, and a door, and about three windows. It's real comfortable—a good cook-stove makes me feel independent and pleasant. I always feel on'ry cookin' on a stove that won't bake, or burns the biscuits."

He eyed the frying pans hanging on their nails, the pots and kettles as bright as when they were purchased, the piles of provisions in the corner and a pyramid of tinned fruit on the shelf of rough lumber, and smiled contentedly.

He stood for a moment debating as to whether to try to repair the wheel on his mower or make a trip to the sawmill for lumber and go around by the Arrowhead post office on his way back for such mail as might have arrived for him.

The latter thought decided him. He had not been there for a month and something might have come in the interim.

When the mules were hitched to a light wagon he threw a frying pan, coffeepot and a few provisions into a box, tied up his bed roll and nailed a piece of "tarp" over the doorway.

"Them War Whoops off the reservation might take a notion to come down here after sarvis berries," he muttered. "This would be great pickin's for some of them savages."

This precaution taken, he started up the "big hill" behind the cabin on the hard, tedious, two-day trip to the sawmill.

It was two o'clock of the next day when he drove into the dooryard of the Arrowhead, perched on his load of lumber. His face was lined with the nervous strain of the hazardous trip, but it lighted when he read the brand on the horse stamping in the deep dust at the hitching rack and fighting the flies which worried it.

Nellie Edwards stepped to the door and called to him as the wagon halted:

"I'll bring your mail, so you needn't get down unless you want to."

"If 'tain't too much trouble." His voice had a tired quaver in it.

"How are you?" she smiled up at him as she passed him a mail-order catalogue and a letter.

"Poorly," he replied grimly. "These mules have about got the best of me. What with one bein' used to workin' on the lead and the other on the wheel in a four-horse outfit, haulin' a load with 'em over these roads is plumb misery."

She lingered while he studied the address and the postmark on his letter with a puzzled expression. Now who in the world could be writing to him from Chicago, and who besides himself knew that his full name was James F. Macomber? The scrawling writing on the cheap envelope was unfamiliar, and he had no acquaintance to his knowledge in the mid-West city.

It suddenly occurred to him that one sure way to solve the mystery was to read it, so he gripped the lines between his knees and tore it open. His lips moved as he deciphered:

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS,
July 2, 1924.

DEAR BROTHER:

Thot I would drop you a line to say hello and tell you maybe I'll get out to see you sometime this summer. I got your address from a fellow that just come back from your county and he said you was ranching. I hope your doing good at it. I been working in a auto repair shop and maken big wages. If I do come I'll wire you when I start so you can meet me. Well thats all I think of at present so will ring off.

from your brother,
ELMER.

THE grip of Macomber's knees relaxed in his amazement, and, just in time, he saved the lines from dropping behind the temperamental heels of Sassafras and Jinny.

"Well—well—well!" His eyes were big with astonishment. "Never know in this world what's waitin' to happen to you just around the corner, do you?"

"Somebody left you a million?" the girl asked in friendly curiosity.

"I wouldn't trade this letter for a million—I wouldn't be so tickled. My brother—the baby of the family—is coming out to see me this summer!"

He spoke as if something momentous was going to happen to him.

"That will be nice," the girl agreed, amiably. "How long since you have seen him?"

Macomber took out a stub of pencil and figured on a piece of lumber.

"Twenty-seven years next January. Father and mother died close together and an aunt took 'Buddy' to raise. I was kind of an extry, a cut back you might say, so when I was fourteen I pulled out and came to Wyoming.

"I drifted around out here, working for my board until I was worth wages, and didn't write like I ought to. When I did

write, my letters came back to me and I never could get track of any of 'em. I never expected to see him again."

"What's his name?" she asked with interest.

"Er—we always called him 'Buddy,' bein' the baby of the family," he evaded. He had once hunted with a city man whose name was Elmer, and he hated it. It was a regular "pilgrim" name like Claude and Arthur, and he shrank from telling it.

"When's he coming?"

"That's the worst of it—says he'll wire. S'pose he thinks I have a telephone and will just step into my autymobile and go after him. Don't know I have to go sixty miles to get a slab of bacon.

"He didn't tell me where to write so I can't get a letter to him. Guess just Chicago wouldn't catch him; they say it's a lot bigger place than Omaha. Well, I'll just make a trip to the railroad in a few days and leave word for him."

"Bring him over some Sunday."

"I shore will," he replied heartily. "He was the cutest kid you ever seen—awful blue eyes, and spunky! Lay down on the floor and bang his heels and roar when he couldn't have everything he wanted. Spoiled, you know—the baby of the family," proudly.

Nellie Edwards tied the leather thongs on the back of the saddle over the mail sack, put her foot in the stirrup and swung on the horse in the light, easy fashion which he admired so greatly.

"Don't wait for your brother—come anyway. We are always glad to see you."

He felt as he did when he listened to "The Herd Girl's Dream" when she smiled at him over her shoulder in delivering the invitation.

The letter Macomber had received shortened the road wonderfully. His heart was singing and a smile played about the corners of his mouth as he brought the willow, fringed at the end with usage, down with a thwack on the sleek rump of Sassafras, and checked Jinny, who forged a foot ahead of him.

He was thinking of Buddy as he remembered him—a chubby barefooted youngster in a blue-gingham apron. His eyes were the color of frost flowers and his pug nose had tiny freckles on it. He recalled distinctly how he ran to meet him when he came from town, demanding in his lisping, baby language if he had brought anything for him, yelling vociferously when he was disappointed.

The Macombers had lived on a homestead in South Dakota, and every detail of the place came back to him vividly, even to the crayon picture of Uncle Abner, his father's brother—the black sheep of the family who had done a stretch at Santa Fe, New Mexico, for highway robbery—which hung in a gilt frame in the parlor.

He smiled broadly when he remembered how Buddy always went to sleep at the table and it had been his task to carry him to bed and button him into his canton-flannel nightie.

The hind wheels of the heavily loaded wagon lurched over a ledge of rock and stopped on an eminence where the mules drew a deep breath and fell to eating.

"I'll give you a durn good tradin' off, that's what I'll give you! You got it comin' and you'll shore get it!" Macomber glared at the pair balefully as he took off his hat and wiped his perspiring forehead with his elbow.

THEN, while they rested, he took out the letter and reread it. It was not easy to realize after twenty-seven years among strangers that he had anybody who belonged to him, of his own flesh and blood, real kinsfolk, like other people.

As he gazed over the grassy plateau below him, the last before he dropped down the "big hill" behind his cabin, his mind was busy painting pictures of the future—pictures which infused him with new ambition and energy.

If Buddy liked the country, which was certain, he could stay on indefinitely. It was not likely he was married or he would have mentioned it. As soon as he, Macomber, proved up on his place he would give him a half interest, and they would work together for their mutual benefit, hard and patiently, so that in a few years

they would have a ranch as good as there was in that section. Two hundred head of cattle wearing their brand would be grazing on their big leases, and there would be stacks of bluestem hay to make the mouths of dry farmers water.

The specter of loneliness during the long months of winter which had sometimes risen to appall him, vanished, and in its place rose a vision of congenial companionship and roseate dreams of future prosperity that made his tired eyes sparkle.

"We'll put out a line of traps as soon as the snow flies and keep busy as squirrels all winter. We'll have a big woodpile of ground cedar, and when the wind howls down the cañon we'll set by the stove evenin's and play the phonograph. Whoo! Jinny. Get ep! Sassafras."

He was halfway across the plateau when he straightened suddenly and looked hard ahead of him. There were wheel tracks, faint but unmistakable, coming from another direction.

They had been made since he had crossed the day before yesterday and he speculated as to who had made them and what had brought visitors over the difficult road in a wagon. Probably, he reasoned, they were made by Indians from the reservation picking service berries along the creeks and coulees, though there was a chance that it might be fishermen from town, which was scarcely likely as his was the only wagon to his knowledge that had ever come into that section.

"I hope them War Whoops don't find my cabin and clean me out," he murmured uneasily, and added: "They ain't any worse than most of them white savages that's come into the country from Nebraska and Ioway and made it so you can't leave a shovel stickin' in the bank without losin' it. I'm shore glad to get away from dudes and honyakers, autymobiles and wire fences.

"Gee! This is a great country. Snap out of it, mulas, and we'll find out who our visitors is pretty pronto."

When he reached the mysterious track he pulled up short and stared at it in astonishment. It was too wide for a wagon track and, besides, in a little patch of soft dirt where something had killed the bluestem, there was the print of a tire.

Macomber's lips puckered in a whistle. As sure as the sun was shining, a car had come into the country over a road which he had thought impassable for anything but horses or a stout light wagon!

He had some nerve, Macomber admitted, but his face clouded. His antipathy for automobiles and town gentry was strong and deep seated. The coming of automobiles meant the extermination of grouse and sage chickens, the killing of deer out of season, the depletion of streams by fish hogs, of tiresome visitors on holidays and Sundays.

"I'll roll a few more boulders into the road to discourage 'em," he thought, grimly, "for I shore likes to choose my own company."

He ruminated as he kept his eyes ahead of him, keenly curious as to the identity of his visitor or visitors.

"When a fellow oncet gets gasoline in his system seems like he ain't ever good for anything afterward. I seen many a good hand ruined from gettin' money enough ahead to buy a jitney."

It occurred to him that it might be either the assessor or the sheriff, but he had thought either of them had too much sense to make the trip except on horseback.

"Guess the 'big hill' will stop 'em," he grinned in spite of his annoyance, "and whoever they are, they shore won't get out of the country without makin' my acquaintance."

The tracks zigzagged over the plateau as if the driver was uncertain of his direction but finally led straight to the edge where the road dropped down the long, steep hill which was the supreme test of a driver's skill and courage.

"If he went down there he's drunk or crazy, and I shore hate to spare lumber to build coffins," Macomber muttered as he set the break and walked forward.

On a small level spot among the pines and junipers he discovered the motorist

who had invaded his domain. His car was jammed against a tree, a sound of tinkering came from underneath and a pair of khaki-covered legs protruded.

MACOMBER slid down and observed dryly:

"Seems like you met up with some bad luck, feller."

At the sound of his voice the owner of the legs squirmed out and got to his feet, staring hard at Macomber before answering. In his unbecoming cap and tourist garb he looked a typical product of the cities, a factory type, commonplace, uninteresting.

He was of stocky build, square jawed, and eyed Macomber without blinking. He had a cocky air, a certain know-it-all manner which Macomber swiftly dubbed "smart Alecky" and that repelled him.

"I'll tell the world," he answered, finally, in a gruff voice that grated upon Macomber. "There must be somethin' wrong with a person's head that would live in this country."

He added before the other could show his resentment:

"I'm lookin' for James F. Macomber."

For the second time that day Macomber's jaw dropped and his eyes widened in amazement.

"You—you are Buddy!" he exclaimed as the truth flashed upon him.

"My moniker is Elmer," replied the other smartly, putting out a strong hand with short, stubby fingers.

Macomber could not collect himself immediately; save the bright-blue eyes there was not a trace of the chubby youngster he remembered. A mental readjustment was necessary before he could grasp the fact that this stranger was his own flesh and blood—the baby he had carried from the table and buttoned into his canton-flannel nightie.

The realization came to him finally and softened his first judgment; his loyalty rushed to the defense of this new Buddy and made him altogether admirable. They were brothers—they had the same name and the same mother. That was enough for Macomber. He opened his heart and took him in to stay forever.

"You've come to make a good visit, Bud?" His face lighted as he noted the trunk and boxes.

"Depends on how you treat me." Elmer's guffaw made Jinny and Sassafras at the top of the hill throw their ears forward.

"You'll be here the rest of your life, then." Macomber beamed upon him.

"Well, I had a good job in Chicago, but I thought I'd take a vacation after I got track of you. I picked up this jitney cheap and flivvered across the country instead of comin' by rail like I wrote you. I won't be out much if I ditch it. What for kind of a spread have you got, anyhow?"

"I can show you better'n I can tell you. We'll be home pretty quick now. This hill is steep and kind of dang'rous with a load on, if you ain't careful. But I got a system that makes it safe and easy. I chop down a pine tree and fasten the top to the hind axle so it drags against the branches and acts as a brake; then I rough lock both wheels and take my time to it."

Elmer stared at the casual explanation but said nothing beyond inquiring what he was going to do when the trees gave out.

"Oh, I'll have a road built by that time."

"You can't get along these days without roads and some kind of a car," observed Elmer in the superior tone which would have irritated Macomber in another.

THE sun was setting and the first shadows of purple dusk were falling over the valley when the wagon stopped beside the cabin. The bark was gone and the needles from the branches of the tree that had acted as a brake on the hazardous trip down the hillside, the mules were tired out and Macomber's face was lined with the strain and tension of getting down without accident, while Elmer's brow was furrowed with a frown from the annoy-

ance of blistered heels and aching muscles.

Macomber sat on the load a moment looking with kindling eyes at the pink glow on his haystacks, at the horses and cattle feeding contentedly below in the valley, at the peaks of the Big Horns bathed in color, and waited for some comment from his brother.

"Ain't this a great place, Bud?" he asked at last. "What do you think of my 'ranchero?' "

"It's hell to git to," Elmer replied crossly. "What you got for supper?"

The eagerness went out of Macomber's face and he was plainly disappointed, but he answered soothingly:

"It'll look better to you in the mornin', when you're rested. You just make yourself comfortable and as soon as I give the mulas their 'berries' I'll stir up a good supper."

Elmer was visibly disappointed.

"Can't you tie 'em up and feed 'em afterward?"

Macomber shook his head:

"My stock always eat before I do."

While they ate their supper of coffee, bacon and hot soda biscuits by the dim light of the lamp with its smoke-coated chimney, Macomber expatiated upon the charms and many advantages of his homestead filing and its location.

"Tain't been sheeped out like most of the country, so there's always good grass and good water. There's shelter for cattle in the willows and the snow goes early. It's away from dudes and pilgrims, and I got good neighbors."

To all of which Elmer listened in unresponsive silence.

"Don't you think you'll like it here?" Macomber asked anxiously.

"Couldn't tell you. I ain't used to roughin' it."

"Roughing it!" Macomber opened surprised eyes at him. Sleeping out in the rain with a saddle for a pillow and saddle blanket for a covering, going without supper and breakfast, and maybe dinner, was his idea of discomfort. This was not luxury exactly, but close to it.

"This'll be a good little cabin, Bud," enthusiastically, "when we get a floor, and a roof, two or three windows and a door on it. Of course," he admitted, "they ain't modern conveniences like electric lights and runnin' water, but as soon as I get time, I can dig out a good little spring in the coulee and build a root cellar."

He talked on volubly of the contemplated improvements, for, he told himself happily, this was his brother, his own kin, and there was no need for the restraint he would have put upon his tongue with an outsider. He explained his hopes, and ambitions, and the possibilities the future held until he communicated some of his enthusiasm to Elmer, whose eyes kindled slowly at the picture of prosperity he painted.

"If you'll go in with me, Bud," Macomber gulped in his eagerness, "I'll give you a half interest in everything, the horses, cattle, and when the place is patented I'll give you half of that, too. You and me can do wonders workin' together. We'll have a stake before we know it.

"I'll give you"—he hesitated, for it was like parting with one of his fingers—"I'll give you Cherokee, my pet saddle horse, for your private. The best cow horse in Wyoming; you can walk up to him anywhere and he'll never quit you. I'll snare me another out of the wild bunch and break him this winter. What do you say?"

He leaned over the table in his earnestness and beamed affectionately upon his brother.

The other hesitated, then asked abruptly:

"Will you put all that in writin'?"

Macomber drew back, his brown eyes had a hurt look in them.

"Why, Bud, don't you trust me? A handshake agreement is as good as a lawyer's document. I'd keep my word with you if it took the hide and taller."

Elmer smiled shrewdly.

"Yes, but you might die, and I wouldn't have a scratch to show for it. Somebody'd step in and claim the layout. It's only business."

"I suppose it is," Macomber admitted.

"A lot of things can happen to a feller in this country; a horse might fall on him; he might get froze in a blizzard; he could slip off the side of a mountain. You draw up the papers and I'll sign 'em, for I shore want you to stay with me."

ELMER proved to be an exceptional worker, and ingenious.

There was not a lazy hair in his head, Macomber told himself often as he saw his brother toiling from sunrise to sunset, and he could do anything he put his mind to. He repaired the wheel of the mower, easily, and built a kitchen cupboard which would have been a credit to a cabinet-maker, after declaring sourly: "Them mice runnin' over everything turns my stummick."

Macomber agreed with him and suggested another improvement:

"Why don't you build a bed while you're at it? They snip my hair when I'm sleepin', and it's annoyin'."

The bed and the cupboard added so wonderfully to the comfort and appearance of the cabin that they decided to finish it immediately. They replaced the split rails on the roof with rough lumber and covered it with dirt, so that it was no longer possible for Macomber to lie in his blankets and count the stars through the cracks.

"A good roof shore makes a difference!" he exclaimed, viewing it with immense satisfaction. "It's aggravatin' to have the rain run in the cookin' and have to keep movin' the flour from one place to another."

The floor was more difficult, as the hard-trodden ground in the cabin was like cement and had to be removed with pick and shovel for the laying of the stringers. They worked all day like a pair of industrious beavers, and again after supper, by lamplight, falling into their blankets to sleep without moving until the mourning doves started their plaintive cooing.

Macomber stopped occasionally to lean upon his shovel and beam upon his brother, who seemed tireless.

He was like their hard-working little mother that he remembered as always busy, putting up fruit for winter, piecing quilts, sewing rags for rugs, darning stockings, and the thought made him especially tender.

"You can do a third more work than I can, Buddy," he said, admiringly, upon one of these occasions. "Of course, you're 'leven years younger, but it's mostly because I been all my life in the saddle and never walked none. I don't s'pose you really know how stout you are, do you?"

He added, laughing: "Guess you could whip me on a sheep pelt with a hand tied behind you."

"I took a few tough guys to a cleanin'," Elmer replied, modestly. "Anybody you want me to beat up for you?"

"I've always been able to do my own battlin', so far. A chink showed me a few little tricks that come in handy, and I got a—er—speci-ality. I won't fight unless I get touched off right—and that takes considerable." He added, soberly: "Somehow I don't like to hurt things—people or animals."

"In lots of ways you're like a woman," Elmer replied critically. "Fussin' around when the house gits dirty, listenin' to birds and talkin' so low that half the time I can't hear you. I've noticed it."

"You might say worse things about me," Macomber defended, though he reddened.

"I hate a sis!"

Macomber smiled oddly. He had been called a good many names in his time but "sis" was not among them.

WHEN the floor of lumber was laid and the tongues and grooves fitted perfectly in most places, Macomber took a childish delight in the achievement. He walked back and forth, around and around, starting away to return for another look at it, repeating over and over:

"Ain't it a great feelin' to walk on a floor after plowin' around in the dirt all summer!"

Next came the door and windows, and, at last, the day when Elmer opened the trunk and boxes, the contents of which put the final touch of home to what to

Macomber seemed the most wonderful cabin in all Wyoming.

There was a framed photograph of his father and mother, family groups and quaint pictures of long-forgotten relatives, among them the crayon of Uncle Abner, the black-sheep road agent. There were little knickknacks that Macomber remembered when he saw them, a box with sea shells on it, a worn leather sewing case with many compartments, and a heart-shaped pincushion.

There were spoons of solid silver that had been a wedding gift to their mother among the treasures, and sheets, towels, pillowcases and fuzzy tidies made by the patient hands that had been still so long in the neglected grave in South Dakota.

Macomber touched each article reverently, and looked with misty eyes at the pictures, while such a feeling of tenderness rose within him as to choke him.

"I had these stored in an attic and just took a notion to bring them in case I wanted to locate out West somewhere," Elmer explained casually.

When the photographs were hung, and the knickknacks placed on a shelf they built for them, with a patchwork quilt over the soogan on the bed and a round rag rug of bright colors in front of it, the cabin looked the last word in homelike comfort to Macomber.

"Ain't this great, Bud!" His face was radiant as he stood in the middle of the floor looking around the cabin.

"There's one thing lackin'——"

"A cat." Macomber laughed as he finished the sentence for him. "I shore like to see a lot of cats around with their tails wavin' when you're milkin'. Not that I ever milked," he admitted.

"A cook," Elmer corrected.

"What do you mean cook?" Macomber looked bewildered. "Don't my grub suit you?"

"Ain't they no girls in this country that a feller can marry?"

Macomber felt himself redden as he replied evasively:

"Not very handy."

He could not for the life of him have told why he hesitated to mention Nellie Edwards, unless it was because of the manner in which Elmer had introduced the subject. To marry in order to be rid of the drudgery of housework was a thought which had never occurred to him. To marry at all was not among his plans for the future. A man could "batch" and be happy if he had plenty of stock around him, to his way of thinking, and he was so homely he doubted if any woman would have him, even if he had desired her.

In days gone by when a schoolmarm or waitress had attracted him, and he had found himself thinking of her smile or her eyes too often, he had saddled his horse and ridden away without looking behind him, and in the future made a wide circle to avoid a meeting.

It was not the first time he had winced at his brother's manner of speaking of women and of things that he vaguely felt sacred and to be respected. In truth, it was far oftener than he would have admitted that Elmer's speeches and mannerisms grated. His loud guffaw set his nerves on edge sometimes, while his lingo, the slang of city streets and alleys, and the vaudeville jokes with which he frequently regaled him, seemed pointless and silly.

Elmer's failure to appreciate a sunrise, or to see anything beautiful in a rosy cloud floating over the green valley when his attention was called to them, filled Macomber with wonder. The smell of the sagebrush after a shower was no different to him than a breeze from a barnyard. The coo of the mourning doves was "them infernal birds hollerin'," while Cherokee was just a horse to him, not a pal to be petted and given special attention because of his faithfulness and intelligence.

Macomber always put any criticism of Elmer from his mind as quickly as possible. Disloyalty to his brother was unthinkable, and his unvarying excuse was: "Bud and me have been raised different. He'll be all right once he gets the gasoline out of his system."

Elmer, on his part, did not attempt to conceal his contempt for Macomber's "softness," his love of birds, flowers and

music, and he particularly resented his hospitality to their occasional visitors.

"This old-time stuff don't get you nowhere," he grumbled. "You'd ought to have charged them Arrowhead cowpunchers for stayin' all night and eatin' up our grub on us."

Macomber said nothing, but his face was a study at the suggestion.

THE house was daubed and warm as an oven by October. There was a root cellar built in the bank ready for winter vegetables. The haystacks had been topped and anchored securely, fenced, and wire strung around the horse pasture. The spring in the coulee had been dug out and walled, and was running a stream of good water, while the small front porch of Macomber's dream was an actuality.

They were both thin from hard work and a diet which had so little variety that it had ceased to be appetizing, but they had accomplished wonders in a comparatively short time and were almost ready for winter. They felt that they might draw a long breath and take a couple of days for the rest they had so much needed.

In spite of their mutual interests they did not seem to have much to say to each other. They realized that they talked a different language and were unable to understand each other.

There were times when Macomber felt almost as lonely as before his brother's coming. Then he could talk to his horses, carry on his whimsical monologues and play his music box, when and as long as it suited him. Now, the phonograph was a slight source of friction between them because Elmer disliked his "pieces"—"The Herd Girl's Dream" particularly. Whenever he played it, Elmer retaliated by removing the stove lid and setting the pots and kettles over the blaze, blackening their bottoms, a cardinal sin to Macomber, who took great pride in keeping them clean and shining. This was one of his idiosyncrasies which came in for much ridicule from Elmer, who looked upon it as nonsense though he usually respected it.

Macomber was hanging the dish towel on the baling-wire line behind the stove after washing the evening dishes, when Elmer said, casually:

"Guess I'll tinker up the jitney and call on the ladies." His guffaw rasped Macomber's nerves as he added: "I'm used to getting around a little."

Macomber felt irritable; he had found the bottoms of the frying pans and kettles black with smoke and he had had a time removing it. He frowned and rolled himself a "homespun" without answering. Instead, he walked to the door where he stood looking off at the tar-paper roof of the homestead cabin across the cañon.

His conscience slowly pricked him. Bud was young and lively; it was natural that he should desire companionship. All work without change got monotonous for a fellow who was not used to it; perhaps he had not done right by Bud in not telling him about Nellie Edwards and taking him to see her. Of course, any girl in her right mind would fall for Elmer, self-assured, talkative and wonderfully good looking, to his way of thinking.

"Let's ride over and call on our neighbors next Sunday." He nodded across the cañon.

"Who are they?"

"The Edwards family."

"Any girls?"

"One—Nellie."

"Good looker?"

"Best in the country."

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"There wasn't any hurry. You got all your life to get acquainted." Macomber looked guilty, however. He added with a constraint which did not escape his brother: "She's a fine girl, Bud. You'd ought to play a stack at her."

"I'll look her over," Elmer returned airily. "I never have no trouble gettin' along with women. There's a jane in Chicago that thinks pretty well of me."

SATURDAY was given to preparations for the Sunday visit, washing shirts, cutting hair and shaving, since an early start was necessary in order to arrive in time for dinner.

When their horses were saddled and they were ready to leave next morning, each looked typical of his environment and as unlike the other as possible. Elmer's sidelong glances at his brother in his cowboy regalia, with satin sleeve holders as a final touch of elegance, were full of an amused superiority, while Macomber struggled loyally against the feeling that it was something of an ordeal to introduce Elmer, who, in a little round felt hat, button shoes and a "butterfly" necktie, looked like a well-paid mechanic out for a holiday.

"You're got up like a movin'-picture cowboy," Elmer commented as Macomber pulled his worn leather bat-wing chaps over his new overalls.

"These are my reg'lar clothes," Macomber replied, nettled. "For more'n twenty year I ain't wore any different."

"I'll never blossom out in no such outfit."

"Boots and chaps are easy to ride in, and flannel shirts are better than hen skins in a country where cold winds blow up sudden and it's chilly evenin's," Macomber explained to him. "Stetsons shade your eyes from the glare on alkali and gypsum, and the stiff brim cuts the wind wonderful. But you'll learn better than I can tell you, and give away your dude clothes to some Injun."

"Not me. I know what I look good in," said Elmer complacently.

But they were late in reaching the Edwards' homestead because the stirrups chafed Elmer's insteps and the buttons on his shoes pressed into the flesh painfully. Gusts of wind sent his stylish hat flying, while the hair which soon covered his cloth trousers distressed him greatly.

Their horses' shadows told Macomber that the family would already be seated at the table, but, worse still, when they arrived he saw two cayuses tied to the haystack which told him there were other guests.

"It's a couple of them snaffle-bit cowboys from the Two-Pole Punkin outfit," he grumbled. "Looks like they'd stay on their own range occasionally."

"They won't worry me none," Elmer replied confidently as he dismounted with considerable caution.

Nellie Edwards appeared in the doorway, and called to them:

"Hurry up! We've just started—and there's chicken!"

Two more saddle horses were tied hurriedly to "Old Man" Edwards' haystack and after the hint Nellie had given them they lost no time in getting to the cabin. She was waiting at the door to greet them.

"I thought you had forgotten your nearest neighbors," she smiled at Macomber.

Macomber explained elaborately:

"We was just ridin' over this way so thought we'd stop in and see how you got along with your hayin'."

She was accustomed to these flimsy fabrications and showed no amusement, but looked at Elmer inquiringly.

"This is my brother from Chicago—the one that wrote the letter. Bud, shake hands with Miss Nellie Edwards."

Her eyelids dropped a little beneath the intent stare of his bright-blue eyes. The color rose in her face as he removed his hat in a manner which was new to her and held her hand a moment longer than was necessary. His bow made the Two-Pole Pumpkin cow-punchers, who were craning their necks to see through the doorway, sick with envy as Elmer said in his deep voice: "Delighted to meet you, Miss Edwards."

His ease of manner when he was introduced to the rest of the family filled Macomber with pride and admiration. It was clear that Bud had been out in society a good deal to be able to think of so many smart things to say to strangers without blushing or stammering.

IN a few moments he was so much at home that an outsider would not have known but that they all were friends of long standing. He joshed with everybody, including the visitors from the Two-Pole Pumpkin, who were unable to conceal their prejudice, not to say hostility, and quickly lapsed into silence. Noting the

fact, Elmer's sly wink at his brother said: "Jealous."

Macomber, too, ate in sober silence, listening to Elmer's fluent conversation upon many subjects—automobiles, airplanes and flying records, the ease with which liquor could be procured in Chicago, and intimate, detailed accounts of its startling murders. It was all entertaining and vastly more interesting than getting it secondhand from the newspapers, and Elmer was so encouraged by their close attention that he neglected his chicken and was not nearly finished when the Two-Pole Pumpkin cow-punchers scraped their feet and their throats and mumbled something about going.

Every one asked in a surprised tone: "Oh, must you?" as if such an idea never had occurred to them, upon which, from habit and in accordance with the custom of the country, they grabbed their plates and started into the kitchen with them.

The Two-Pole Pumpkin riders then made brief adieus and vanished. Mrs. Edwards removed her apron as a signal that her duties were ended, and the head of the family extracted a straw from the broom in passing and retired to the shade of the haystack for his Sunday siesta, while the brothers remained with Nellie.

Macomber lingered to wipe the dishes, for this he regarded as his special privilege and always the high spot of his visit. Their intimate, friendly talks and exchange of ideas were among the happiest and most satisfying that he could remember in a life which had not been altogether uneventful. The way she looked when she said this or that, her smile, her expression were vivid in his mind for days after, and when their fingers met on the heavy china —well, that sensation remained also.

Now he picked up the dish towel as a matter of course when Elmer, seeing his purpose, snatched it from him with the guffaw which made him shiver, saying jocosely:

"Here, lemme dry them dishes. I got to get broke in to housework if I stay in this country, and the sooner the quicker."

Macomber hesitated, then, with the faint patient smile which was characteristic, resigned the dish towel.

"All right, Buddy. Do a good job on them."

He joined Edwards at the haystack, where they talked of the price of cattle, the advisability of shipping early to the Omaha market and kindred subjects, while listening subconsciously to sounds of laughter from the kitchen.

Nellie came up beside him as he was tightening his cinch before leaving.

"I like—'the baby of the family,'" she whispered.

Her eyes were bright, her face animated, he noticed. He replied, gravely:

"Bud's a fine fellow. He's a great worker and a square shooter. I think the world of him."

THEY were halfway home before Macomber, after waiting impatiently for Elmer to express his opinion of the Edwards family, ventured:

"They're real people—the Edwardses—the kind that'll go a long piece down the road for a friend. We're lucky to have them for neighbors."

"They'll do," carelessly. "But the girl ain't my style. I like 'steppers.'"

"What do you mean 'steppers?'"

"Bobbed hair, silk stockin's, red lips, rouge and powder, dance, drive a car, know their way around, as the sayin' is. Nellie's too darned sensible. Gimme blond chickens." He winked knowingly.

Macomber considered the answer a while before he returned, dryly:

"A girl like that would be kind of harmless around a homestead, wouldn't she? Nellie makes a hand anywhere. She reads brands as well as I can, and when she drops her rope on a calf she's got him. She can cook and make her own clothes. Besides, I claim she is plumb handsome. She's a good bet, Buddy."

Elmer gave him a sidelong glance and smiled at his enthusiasm.

In spite of his avowed preference for the blond chickens, Elmer was ready to start the next Sunday morning to have dinner with the Edwards family. When

he learned that Macomber was not going he borrowed his boots and Stetson, also the bat-wing chaps he had ridiculed.

"These duds *are* easier to ride in," he admitted, to the delight of Macomber, who saw in the concession evidence that Elmer was falling in with the ways of the country and would eventually change his viewpoint upon other matters wherein they differed.

If he felt a pang when he saw his best flannel shirt, his silk kerchief and satin sleeve holders also appropriated, he did not mention it, but said to himself as he watched Elmer riding away on Cherokee:

"What's mine is his, is the way I figger it. It's fifty-fifty to the end of the road with me and Buddy."

The Sunday visits became regular and Macomber continued to remain at home upon one pretext or another—post holes to dig, the family washing—and Elmer did not urge him.

It was late autumn. The bluestem had turned yellow and sparkled with frost in the early morning when, one still afternoon, Macomber sat alone in the cabin playing the phonograph. Elmer had gone to the post office, so he took advantage of his absence to play his favorite records as often as suited him. "The Herd Girl's Dream" never grew old to him, and now as he listened enraptured the effect was the same as the first time he had heard it, and, as always, he thought of Nellie Edwards

He walked mechanically to the door and looked off at the tar-paper roof across the cañon, murmuring:

"Guess you'll be buildin' a new bunk house one of these days and movin' in—eh, hombre?" There was a curious, still feeling at his heart, but no bitterness.

Taking it all in all, he was lucky—oh, wonderfully lucky. His dry cows were so fat they could scarcely walk and he meant to ship them shortly. The horses came bouncing off the hills like antelope, squealing and playing, and were in fine condition to stand a hard winter if they had to.

But the cabin—his heart fairly melted within him as he looked around the cabin, warm, bright, homelike—his pride in it was indescribable. He did not believe it would be possible for another to realize how much he loved it. And with Bud for company through the long winter—a shadow crossed his face and he kicked a chip absent-mindedly from the floor of the porch as his mind came back to his brother.

Elmer did not give him his confidence in any matter that concerned him personally. His private hopes, plans, ambitions were as much a secret as the day he found him tinkering under his jitney. They talked of their mutual prospects, but there it ended.

There were times when it seemed to Macomber that Elmer was more like a hired man than a brother, yet his heart was full of affection for him and when there was any question of a sacrifice it was he who made it, gladly.

Elmer was not like either his father or mother in looks or disposition, as Macomber remembered them. In truth, he bore a rather marked resemblance to Uncle Abner, the stare of whose eyes followed them around the cabin as he hung in his gilt frame between the windows.

There were the same square jaws—square in the wrong place as if they were biting down hard on some tough substance. But Bud was honest, no shirk, either; he did his share of the work, and more, if anything. And these were the qualities Macomber dwelt on when some speech or act of his brother's hurt or irritated him.

"We've been raised different," he reiterated to himself upon such occasions. "He'll be all right when he gets the gasoline out of his system."

Whatever was keeping Bud, he wondered. He had started early for the Arrowhead post office and should have been back by two o'clock, easily. It was four o'clock now, and, with the shorter days, dark came early in the valley.

He stepped around the corner of the cabin to see if he could catch a glimpse of him moving among the pines, or in the open spaces on the steep trail which zigzagged cautiously to the bottom. He

thought once he heard something, a metallic sound like Cherokee's shod hoof striking a rock, but it was not repeated, so he concluded he had imagined it.

WHILE he did the chores and split wood for morning he stopped every few minutes to look up the trail and listen. His anxiety increased as the dusk deepened, and he set about getting an early supper.

"Bud'll be hungry," he murmured. "I'll make some good biscuits and give him the eggs I was savin' for pancakes. Guess I'll open that can of grapefruit—he shore likes it. Prunes is a swell dish for a sour dough—he can have my share of it."

The biscuits had fallen and the fried potatoes grown clammy before Macomber reluctantly sat down at the table without his brother. He ate in nervous haste, raising his head frequently for the sound of a rolling boulder or the clink of sharp lava rocks which would tell him that Cherokee was bunching his feet and sliding down the steep pitches.

Elmer might have been persuaded to stay at the Arrowhead for supper and ride home by moonlight; it was not impossible that the whim had seized him to make a week-day visit to the Edwards family, in which event he would not be back until to-morrow; but, again, there was always the chance that his horse had rolled on and hurt him. There were plenty of badger holes to step in between the top of the hill and the Arrowhead, and while Cherokee was a careful horse, the best of them had been known to make a misstep sometimes.

This fear haunted him, and he pictured Elmer with a broken leg, or injured internally, suffering and waiting for him to come to him. This picture became so vivid that, finally, he looked at his watch and muttered:

"If he isn't here in twenty minutes I'll ketch a horse and go to meet him. I wouldn't sleep a wink anyway."

The time was not up when he reached for his hat and Mackinaw. He blew out the lamp and closed the door behind him. The full moon was rising above the dark outlines of the Big Horn Mountains, while every star in the heavens was out and twinkling brilliantly.

It was a marvelous night, impressing Macomber with its beauty in spite of the anxious thoughts which filled his mind and deepened the lines in his forehead.

"I'm nervous as a widder woman," he muttered, turning down the trail toward the horse pasture. "My teeth would chatter if I'd let 'em. Something shore must have happened to Buddy."

With the words he stopped short and listened. The rattle of rocks on the hill above was unmistakable; then Cherokee whinnied. Relief cleared Macomber's face instantly and he almost ran to the cabin in his haste to have supper ready by the time Elmer had unsaddled.

When the dark figures of horse and rider emerged from the pines and stopped in the shadow of the cabin, Macomber opened the door and called:

"Hello, Bud!"

A grunt answered him.

"I was gettin' oneasy—couldn't think what kept you." His caressing tone was almost maternal.

"I'm over seven."

The rude answer chilled him and he made no further attempt at conversation until Elmer came in and slid the mail sack across the room instead of handing it to him, when he asked:

"Any mail for me?"

"A dun from the storekeeper and a mail-order catalogue. Don't look like your friends are very thick in this country: you ain't drawed a letter since I been here." His tone was unpleasant, decidedly.

A quick glance at Elmer's face told him that his mood matched it—"on'ry" was Macomber's word for the look on it. He continued to bustle about getting the warmed-up supper on the table, while Elmer splashed and spluttered in the tin washbasin and dried his face on the towel hanging outside the doorway.

"I expect you're tired," he suggested as Elmer sat down and looked the table over.

"Who wouldn't be tired in this God-forsaken country!" He added with a sneer: "This rotten grub is knockin' my stummick; I'm sick of tin-can cookin'."

The hurt look in Macomber's eyes deepened, but he said in the coaxing tone one uses to a cross baby:

"I cooked them two eggs for you, and that grapefruit is as sweet as sugar."

"These eggs is raw—you know how I like 'em." Elmer slapped them back in the frying pan, crumpled a piece of paper and slammed the frying pan over the blaze of it.

Macomber's tanned face reddened with the swift flash of anger which passed over him at this deliberate disregard of his wishes in the matter of blacking the bottom of his cooking utensils. He did not protest, however, but tore a leaf from his book of cigarette papers and walked to the door, where he stood smoking and looking at the moon which was now flooding the valley with a strong, white light.

WHAT had come over Bud? Was it just a mood, or had something happened to bring out a side that was new to him? He had seen him impatient, critical, superior—but never ugly.

It was an unfamiliar kind of ugliness to Macomber, not like that of the tough hombres on the warpath he had encountered, but a heavy brutality which gave his face an expression that reminded him of city thugs whose pictures occasionally appeared in newspapers.

Bud would feel better in the morning—to-night he was tired and hungry—and in the meantime he would say no more to him, but go to bed as soon as possible. With this resolution he took the water bucket from the shelf and walked to the spring in the coulee.

As he came up the trail he heard Elmer stepping briskly about the cabin and it passed through his mind that he would leave the dishes until morning so the light should not disturb him. There was nothing like a good sleep to cure ill nature and change the color of the universe.

The cigarette dropped from his parted lips as he stepped into the doorway. Did he see right? Was he dreaming? Or had Bud gone out of his mind suddenly? His trunk and boxes which had stood against the side of the cabin, were pulled into the middle of the floor and he was taking down the framed photographs.

Macomber put down his bucket and laid his hand on Elmer's shoulder.

"What you doin', Bud?"

With a twitch that left Macomber's arm hanging, he answered:

"I'm pullin' out in the mornin'." His voice was as hard as the clang of an anvil.

Macomber's knees trembled and it seemed as if his heart ceased beating.

"What's the matter, Bud? Have I hurt your feelin's, or anything?"

"You couldn't hurt my feelin's. I'm sick of your damned dump, that's what's the matter, and I'm quittin' just as quick as I can get my stuff together."

Macomber walked over and leaned against the door jamb for the support it gave him. He was stunned; his brain stopped working; his air castles—the world was falling and he was helpless to do anything about it.

He found his voice and protested weakly:

"But you must be sore about something—something in particular."

"I been sore ever sence I come here. This ain't no country for a white man."

"But we got such a chance," Macomber pleaded. "You and me workin' together like we have, can do wonders."

"Aw, there ain't no business about you—boardin' people for nothin' and playin' the phonograph when you ought to be diggin' post holes. You'll never have nothin'." He went on stripping the walls ruthlessly.

Macomber retorted with a show of spirit:

"Looks as if they was so much business about you, you'd have somethin' beside a secondhand jitney and a couple of hundred dollars on deposit."

The shot, which was unanswerable, infuriated Elmer; and Macomber, instantly sorry, apologized.

"I shouldn't have said that. Let's shake and start all over, Buddy."

He stretched out his hand toward his brother.

"Don't *Buddy* me!" Elmer shouted. "You're no more to me than a stranger, and I'm sick of you! You don't know nothin' and you're yellow or you wouldn't take the bawlin's out I've give you!"

Macomber winced under each brutal sentence as if hit with a hammer. He seemed to shrink—to grow smaller under the bombardment of insults hurled at him.

He sat motionless, trying to grasp the incredible, unbelievable fact that his brother hated him. The look in his patient brown eyes was like that of a dumb animal suffering as they rested on Elmer, whose face wore a smirk of satisfaction at the visible evidence that he was hurting.

A smile played about the corner of his tight, selfish mouth as he tossed the knick-knacks Macomber prized to veneration into one of the boxes—the worn leather sewing box, the heart-shaped pincushion, the fuzzy tidies. He snatched the patchwork quilt from the bed, wadded it into a corner and jammed the rag rug after it.

It seemed not to occur to him that his brother had an equal share in the personal effects of his parents, but collected them all to the last towel, sheet and pillowcase —to the cheapest trifle—with an air of taking what belonged to him.

PACKING in this fashion was a short process, and when he had finished he slammed down the lid of the trunk, clamped it and nailed the boxes, then swung around upon Macomber with a demand which had a threat in it:

"I suppose you'll be ready to divide and turn over my share of the cattle and horses to-morrow?" He added with a quick grin, his eyes glittering with malice: "I sold Cherokee and the saddle to a guy at the Arrowhead for forty dollars."

"You—you mean——" Macomber stammered.

"I mean I've worked here all summer without wages and I got something comin'. I want my share like you promised." His resemblance to Uncle Abner was marked as he squared his jaw and thrust his chin forward.

"I'll do what I agreed," Macomber said, slowly, his head bowed, his eyes fixed upon the floor of the cabin. "Pick out what you think's owin' to you, and take 'em. I don't want to quarrel with you—Elmer."

"I'll bet you don't want to quarrel with me." The other replied, significantly, with the mirthless guffaw that rasped Macomber's nerves however often he heard it. "Don't think you could stop me, do you?"

He despised his brother sitting there at the table looking so crushed, a shabby, abject figure, in his run-over cowboy boots, ragged shirt and faded overalls, taking all he said to him without a show of spirit.

The silence grew oppressive in the cabin and Macomber mechanically, without entirely realizing what he was doing, wound the phonograph which was still open and placed the needle on the record. As "The Herd Girl's Dream" started, Elmer snarled at him: "I hate that damned piece, and you know it!"

Macomber pulled a leaf from his cigarette papers and shook tobacco into it.

"Stop it, will you?" The request was an order.

Macomber did not comply, but took a match from his pocket and walked to the doorway, where he scratched it on the casing. He stood there smoking and looking down the moonlit valley, as still as death and uncanny in its white beauty. He could have read easily and the horses feeding on a hillside were easy to distinguish. He could not remember a night quite like it, ever.

A BOARD creaked in the cabin and he was conscious that Elmer was moving, softly. His shadow fell on the wall of the cabin in an odd posture. A quick alarm, like sudden panic, seized him and he swung around to see his brother's hand creeping toward a three-foot iron bar, that they used to kill pack rats, which stood at the foot of the bed.

Instinct, intuition, enabled him to guess

his purpose as readily as if he had told him. His hand had grasped the bar when Macomber exclaimed sharply:

"Don't do that, Elmer!"

The other whirled upon him, startled for a second, then snarled at him: "Stop that damned piece, I tell you, or I'll bust it for you!"

Then he raised the bar and made a quick step forward. Macomber was quicker. He stood between him and the music box when he would have struck the record. His face had a pallor under its tan, but he did not flinch or his eyes waver as he repeated:

"Don't do that, Elmer."

For answer the other brought down the iron bar, the end grazing Macomber's forehead, while the slightly bent-over edge, with its sharp points, cut a jagged gash in his cheek, from which the blood started.

The pupils of Macomber's eyes became pin points as he drew back and looked at his brother. His voice was still low, but ominous, deadly, as he said with a peculiar snicker:

"Oh, if you want to go that route—you slum cur—you long-tailed rat from the tenements——"

He turned with a swift movement and blew out the lamp on the table; then with an oath he sprang upon his brother, bending him backward with the suddenness of his attack and the weight of his body. The phonograph was still going, and as they struggled and strained and fought over the floor, the advantage first with one and then the other, it was to the plaintive, wailing, heart-searching strains of the violin, flute and harp trio.

It was to a finish. Neither had any thought of asking or giving quarter. Murder was in the hearts of each in this unnatural battle, as brutal and merciless as two animals seeking to destroy each other.

Yet Macomber's subconscious mind was filled with a sickening horror. It was his brother—Buddy—the baby of the family—that he was straining with the last ounce of strength that was in him to injure—to torture.

He felt soul sick, nauseated when he realized that the arm and the soft-dimpled hand which had once clasped his neck when he carried the sleeping baby from the table, were the same that were now doing their utmost to choke him until he grew limp in the grip of those strong, stubby fingers.

The greater weight and strength of his brother was offset by his quickness and steellike leg muscles, hardened by long years in the saddle, and by the jujutsu tricks the Japanese cook had taught him in gratitude for a favor done him. He used them all as he could, wringing sharp cries from his victim when the pain became too excruciating for endurance, and fighting on with savage, primitive ferocity for an advantage which would give him the opportunity to use his "specialty."

The music stopped, the needle scratched the record, the spring ran down and still they fought over the cabin. The moonlight streamed into the open door and played upon them like the powerful white light of a calcium.

Macomber had an unreal feeling of being alone on the planet, just he and his brother, thumping over the floor, upsetting dishes and boxes, breaking to clinch again and fall upon each other, straining and grunting, their breathing hard and labored. The blood was running into the corner of his mouth, his brother's face was smeared with it—he could see it in the moonlight.

It was horrible—but he had no thought of quitting. He believed that it was his life or Elmer's.

Thoughts shot through his mind after the manner of a person drowning—Nellie Edwards, asleep across the cañon—the stillness—if only a horse would cough or the bell on the mula tinkle—if Bud killed him, would he bury him or just leave him? So on and so on.

THEIR breathing had changed to gasps, sobs of exhaustion, when suddenly a cry rang out to make the horses grazing on the hillside raise their heads and listen.

"You're gougin' my eye out! For God's

sake—stop!" The voice rose to a scream with the last sentence.

"'Nough?" Just sufficient breath remained for Macomber to ask the question. Elmer did not answer immediately. Then:

"Yes! Yes! YES!" A shrill crescendo like a woman in agony.

Macomber got up slowly, leaving his brother on the floor, rolling and moaning. The lamp had tipped over and the odor of kerosene was strong in the cabin. It did not matter—nothing mattered—he felt as if the end of the world had come for him anyhow. He washed the blood from his face and hands in the moonlight, undressed slowly, and lay down on his side of the bed to wait for morning.

After a time, Elmer, without removing his clothes, lay down beside him; and so they remained, tense, rigid, each acutely conscious of the other's breathing until the first faint light came over the Big Horns and the mourning doves started cooing.

Macomber cooked breakfast while Elmer harnessed the mules and put the trunk and boxes in the wagon. After he had eaten he put his brother's share in the warming oven, saddled his horse and rode down the valley to gather the stock to be divided. When he returned the trunk and boxes were gone and Elmer was waiting at the corral for him.

They made the division without speaking, Elmer taking what he wanted and starting them up the trail. When the last hoof was out that he considered due him, he rode away without looking back and Macomber put up the bars behind him.

Macomber walked slowly to the cabin, pausing at the corner to watch his horses and cattle climbing the hillside, with Elmer on Cherokee, riding the saddle he had given him, driving them.

He had gone without a word of farewell after nearly six months together, feeling neither regret nor shame, apparently. Other than his industry, he had not a single family trait that Macomber could think of. Devoid of any natural feeling whatever, he was the essence of selfishness. Even Uncle Abner, whom he resembled, sent generous gifts and affectionate messages to his nieces and nephews before too-active sheriffs interfered with his profession.

Macomber felt as if his ambition were gone, as if he had lost his grip somehow. What, after all, had he to work for? He would wear himself out building up a ranch and then die alone like the other old codgers denned up in the rocks like so many dog coyotes—to be found by some stray visitor after the rats and varmints had worked on him.

He might as well board up the door and windows and call it a failure—this would not be the only abandoned homestead in Wyoming and Montana. Then he would swallow the pill—no matter how bitter—and go back to the Arrowhead and work with the snaffle-bit cowboys for forty dollars.

This was practically his determination when he went into the cabin. He stood in the middle of the floor looking about him, at the bare walls stripped of the family photographs and the heart-shaped pincushion, at the shelf empty of its knick-knacks, at the ugly soogan which the patchwork quilt had covered, at the spot in front of the bed where the bright rag rug had given the final touch of home to the surroundings.

Not a thing remained which had made the cabin look like heaven to him. It was desolation.

His face worked and he put his hand to his throat where it hurt him.

"I'm clean—clean as a whitefish," he murmured. "And he done it—Buddy—the baby of the family!"

The one thing left that he cared for was his phonograph, and it had nearly cost him his life to save it from destruction. He walked over to the table where the phonograph was shoved against the wall for safety, and lifted the cover.

THERE, on top of "The Herd Girl's Dream," with the needle placed exactly in the center of the envelope, was a folded letter addressed to his brother. Obviously it was placed there to attract his attention. He opened it and read:

DEAR ELMER: I thought I'd tell you that I won't look for you over any more on Sundays unless you bring Jim with you. I think he feels that he isn't welcome or something. I can see you don't appreciate him. You ride his horse and wear his clothes and then talk about him. Maybe he isn't as smart as you are, and plays the phonograph when he ought to be digging post holes, but there's more principle in his little finger than there is in your whole body, and you know it. He wouldn't do you thataway, for he worships you.

I hope this won't make any hard feelings between us, but we all think a lot of Jim Macomber and we're his friends first, last, and all the time. What's more, Elmer, you'll never be anything but a pilgrim if you stay here forever. You got too much gasoline in your system.

NELLIE.

Macomber folded the letter, suddenly alive with nervous energy. His step was buoyant as he walked to the doorway and looked at the tar-paper roof across the cañon, then down the valley. His eyes shone with their old enthusiasm and he said aloud, joyously:

"This is shore a beau-ti-ful place, hombre, and I shore got my neck bowed to make a ranch of it!"

Look for more of Caroline Lockhart's work in future issues.

WHAT'LL WE DO?

JUST now there are about sixteen million motor cars in use in the United States. This seems to our pedestrian mind quite enough to go on with for a good long while, but automobile manufacturers do not feel that way about it. Mr. C. D. Hastings, who makes and sells them, says that eventually there will be thirty-three million gasoline burners in use in the country.

It is estimated that there are forty million people gainfully employed, and that eighty per cent of them are the legitimate prey of automobile salesmen. When all of these prospects have been induced to sign on the dotted line, either for a new car or for a used one, the automobile trade will have reached what economists call the saturation point. After that the automobile-manufacturing industry will build just enough cars to take care of replacements—a mere five million a year. This seems a dark outlook for the motor makers—until you think that five million cars a year is a larger output than has yet been achieved in this field.

After we get these thirty-three million cars, what are we going to do with them? New roads, increased parking spaces, more efficient traffic control—these are things that must be provided in the next few years.

ONE BETTER

DURING a recent political campaign in France, Deputy Mandel, one of Georges Clemenceau's erstwhile right-hand men, was running for reëlection. Stumping his district vigorously and with every hope of success, Monsieur Mandel was not only astonished but progressively irritated at the unfriendly attitude of many of his audiences. At one gathering he was repeatedly offended by a group of hecklers whose stock in trade consisted of a long, shrill and concerted whistle. Mandel at length lost his temper.

"Gentlemen," he said, following a particularly lengthy outburst from the whistling auditors, "I am flattered. I perceive that I am a greater man than Rostand. You will recall that in his play, 'Chantecler,' that sublime dramatist made the birds talk But here, to-night, I have surpassed him, for I have made the donkeys whistle!"

The Banker of Koyokuk

By Robert Russell Strang

Author of "Cassiar Dixon Pays His Debts," "Aloona," Etc.

Capital, in the person of "Hardy Jim," and labor, represented by Joe Gilker, come to grips on Chub Gulch lease. Meanwhile "Taglo Charlie" absorbs experience in the great Outside and learns to fight fire with fire. A story of Alaska that mirrors the life and spirit of the land with vivid art.

(A Novelette.)

CHAPTER I.

AMBITIONS.

"HARDY JIM,' you're the greatest pick-and-shovel artist in all Alaska!" declared "Taglo Charlie." "And I never want a better cabin pardner, nuther. But you're simple, Jim; jes' about as easy to step on as a clam."

Taglo slipped the blade of his knife under two square inches of flapjack and tossed it into the whiskered hole in his face with the neatness and dispatch born of lifelong practice.

"Yeah, I suppose," agreed the little man seated at the opposite end of the little pole table.

"'Yeah, I suppose,'" mimicked Taglo Charlie with scorn. "If somebody was to tell you your head was a mushmelon, you'd say 'Yeah, I suppose.' Ye gawds! Ain't you got no spirit a-tall?"

"I mean to say——" stammered Hardy Jim.

"You didn't, or you would of," cut in Taglo. "But listen you here, Mister I. M. A. Worm, they's laws that work in favor of even such pink gloriannas like you. One o' these is that in this world a man gets just what's comin' to 'im.

"That statement sounds like the music that proceeds from the violent ward of a ha-ha house, but when you come to set down gold ounce per ounce with flour, duds and self-respect, you'll find an as-

tonishin' balance. Yes, sir! If my arm was long enough I'd chalk up on the Milky Way in letters umpty miles high: YOU GET JUST WHAT'S COMIN' TO YOU."

"I think," observed Hardy Jim hesitantly, "you should'ave been a preacher."

"Is that so?" sneered Taglo Charlie. "Well, get your ears on the job and listen. Are you aware," he charged, "that since the day we arrived on Chub Gulch last April you've done the work of two men? That no matter what the provocation—and I'll say there was lots of it floatin' around at times—you never sulked or got mad? By the Lord, I'd give the sixty thousand we cleaned up this summer to see you r'arin' sore just once!"

Hardy Jim essayed a smile, a forlorn affair. His employer resumed:

"When the square set at the bottom of the shaft gave way in July and came near makin' sour-dough jelly outa me; and the cribbin' of the shaft corkscrewed, and everything seemed hell bent for my funeral, all you could see to do," cried Taglo with infinite contempt, "was to risk your own everlastin' hide by shinnying down the rope like a monkey, haulin' me out from under the timbers and puttin' a rope under my arms; scurryin' back on top again and hoistin' me out just two and a half seconds before the whole shaft caved in——"

"Well, you see——" Hardy began apologetically.

"*Not a word outa you!*" roared Taglo fiercely, and fixing Hardy with his eye. "Wherefore, to wit, sayin' nothin' a-tall about whereas," he blustered, "half of the sixty thousand we cleaned up this summer is yours!"

Taglo snatched up his iron coffee cup and drained it.

"I won't take it," replied Hardy Jim in a surprisingly firm tone. "I ain't earned it, and I won't have no money about me I ain't earned."

"Well, I'll be flabber agitated!" gasped Taglo. "Darned if they ain't a rabbit wire in your spine after all!"

"I—I wouldn't mind takin' a lease on the claim this winter, though," Hardy intimated.

Taglo Charlie brought down his clenched fist and the tin dishes on the table danced.

"Name the percentage you want," he cried, "and I won't kick if you claim every dollar you take out!"

"Seventy-five—twenty-five," said Hardy in a timorous voice, "with me on the short end."

Taglo Charlie eyed his sole employee with all the disgust, scorn and contempt he could call up.

"I suppose you think my life ain't wuth more'n about three cents," he at length sneered.

"Yeah, I suppose——" Hardy caught himself. "I mean to say," he went on hastily, "what I did happened on workin' hours; was just a part of the days' work, as ye might say. And anyway," he concluded brightly, "you would'ave done the same for me. You can't hardly reckon the value of a man's life in dollars and cents," he added.

Taglo rose and sliced a pipeful of tobacco from a plug with an old razor blade, then began to work it in his hands.

"The lease is yours, Hardy," he began, "on condition that you make it fifty-fifty. With another man just half as good as yourself, your share of the clean-up next spring ought to net you twenty-five or thirty thousand."

Taglo stuffed the tobacco into his pipe and lit up. "And I'll tell you something else," he resumed with a sly wink. "You can rock out your man's wages on Sundays durin' the winter."

"But that's against the law!" objected Hardy Jim.

"But how am I to know anything about it!" roared Taglo. "It's what I'd do in your place," he concluded lightly.

"By makin' it fifty-fifty," muttered Hardy, "you take all the gamble out of the proposition, all the interest. You're just makin' me a present of twenty-five thousand dollars, at least. And ten or twelve is all I need for my—my——" Hardy Jim paused and colored to the roots of his hair.

"Out with it!" shouted Taglo Charlie.

"Orange grove," said Hardy in an embarrassed whisper.

TAGLO raised his eyes and hands in horror. "Is that your idea of future bliss and happiness?" he asked.

Hardy Jim's eyes shone. In ecstasy he twined and untwined his hands. He nodded quickly. "I came to Alaska to earn the price of one." He sighed, turned his head and stared out the window. "Twenty-three years ago."

"And you've had that idea in your head all this time!" cried Taglo incredulously.

"Slep' with it every night," confessed Hardy.

"Some orange grove, I'll say!" A foolish smile crept into Taglo's face. He puffed rapidly at his pipe for a few moments. "Mine," he intimated in a small voice, "has been a trip around the world."

"And did you have that idea in your head when you came to Alaska in 'ninety-eight?" inquired Hardy unsmilingly.

Taglo nodded sheepishly. "But I've a'ready made two starts," he defended. "In the fall of nineteen hundred I sold a claim on Hunker up in the Klondike country for forty thousand. That time I got as far as Skagway. In which days a rich man could 'ave sailed into heaven in a Pullman a lot easier than a miner could get outa that burg with a poke of dust.

"Next time I made the price of a round-the-world ticket was over in the Candle country. Thirty-five thousand it was, that time. I hit the high spots for Nome, ong root, as the Dutch say, for Seattle. After buyin' me a passage on the *Victoria,* which was to start south at ten next morning, and puttin' my dust in the hotel safe, I sets out to see the town.

"Bein' open season on Tom and Jerry, I does a little shootin'. By 'n' by I finds myself in the company of a guy who's tellin' me that he, too, is goin' south on the *Victoria,* which I shakes hands with 'im, and we tag along together."

TAGLO CHARLIE paused, gathered his brows and shook his head.

"Tell me, Hardy," he asked presently, "do you think I resemble the late King Solomon in any way?"

Hardy eyed his employer solemnly. "You've got the whiskers——" he began.

"Yeh, and the bone, and the muscle, and the ivory," Taglo cut in. "No matter. The guy I'm tellin' you about was the most agreeable stiff I ever met up with in all my life.

"If ever I thought about myself before that night, Hardy, it was as a pretty average sort of roughneck. But the way this Joe hung on my words! He'd ask me a question. After I'd answered it in my usual fine style he'd stare at me in a worshipin' sort o' way, then declare I was a college professor in disguise.

"Or it was: 'You're surely one brainy guy!' or 'Massive intellect!' or 'I'll bet you were eddicated at Yarvard or Hale.' and so on and so forth. And after I'd solved all the problems that was bothering the universe about that time, he wound up by declarin' that I ought to be next president and, by gum! he himself would start the ball a-rollin' just as soon as we got to the coast.

"What did I think? Huh. They's a big brass band whammin' into my ears that I'm wuth thirty-five thousand dollars, and that I'm about to start on my trip around the reputed globe. My dream has come true, hurray, hurray!

"Savvy, Hardy? And all this time I'm floatin' down a galumpshious river of Tom and Jerry. Uh-huh; I concluded this Joe guy was the most sensible man I'd ever run across, a prophet, in fact. And after wonderin' why none of my other friends had called my attention to my massive intellect, I set their neglect down to plumb orneriness.

"Oh, that I had only stuck to straight rye!

"However, I remember gettin' back to the hotel and bein' handed my dust, Joe helpin' me to carry it. Then we had one more Tom and Jerry somewhere and—I'm off on a trip to the moon.

"I came to in an old shack down on the beach with little more than a thirst to my name. Soon enough I discover that the

Victoria has been twenty hours on her way. 'Massive intellect!' Cold mush!

"Thus was frustrated my second attempt to circle the well-known world. Third time is lucky they say, Hardy. And I ought to get more than a peek for sixty thousand. Huh?"

"You'd ought to be able to go round the world half a dozen times with a poke that long," declared Hardy Jim. "Which all I want to own of it is ten acres"—again the light leaped into his eyes—"in oranges."

"But if ten or twelve thousand was all you ever wanted, Hardy," cried Taglo, "you could'ave earned that much several times over by just workin' for wages since you came North."

"I know—now. But I insisted on prospecting."

"And you never dropped onto anything a-tall?"

"Once I came mighty close to makin' a pile. I stayed with that claim for seven years. On Fish Creek in the Fairbanks country, it was. Every fall I'd say to myself, 'I'll run into that pay streak, this winter.' But in spring I'd clean up the same old five-six hundred dollars—grubstake money. There was gold all over that claim, but the' was too much gravel and bed rock mixed with it. It puzzled me.

"One winter night I got up out of my bunk, made up my pack and hit the trail for Iditerod. On that twenty-acre claim I had sunk thirty shafts, all in neat rows up and down the creek, and about fifty feet apart in the rows.

"Two years afterward a Swede restaked that claim, and in the first shaft he sank—squarely between two of mine—he landed on rich pay. The gold was lodged in a reef of slate twelve feet wide and about five hundred long. He got away with two hundred and fifty thousand."

"And yet they say they's nothin' in luck!" exclaimed Taglo.

"Another time," went on Hardy Jim, "I worked steady for a man on Gold Hill for two years and a half; told him to keep my wages until I had ten thousand comin' to me. Unknown to me, the pay suddenly gave out, when I had nine thousand three hundred and fifty comin'. One day he started for Dawson on a business trip. Which I've never laid eyes on 'im since."

Taglo Charlie rose, stretched himself and put on his Mackinaw coat and fur cap.

"Well, if I'm to raft it to Nulato and catch me a steamboat for the great Outside before the freeze up, I've got to get busy. You get the trail junk ready, Hardy. I'll go hitch up the dogs."

Taglo Charlie stepped to the cabin door. In the bed of Chub Gulch, which was Taglo's kingdom, a half dozen husky dogs were at play in the new snow. He gave a shout. The dogs raised their heads, cocked their ears and started for the cabin in long bounds.

Taglo hauled a sled from the cache and lifted an armful of dog harnesses from a peg. One of these he selected and held up invitingly. Six gray forms leaped at it, barking joyously. Taglo slipped the collar over the head of his lead dog, by name Rum.

Half an hour afterward, in a cloud of snow kicked up by the feet of the flying dogs, the two miners set out for Coldfoot, distant a matter of two hundred miles.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRIKE ON CINNABAR.

A GREAT many men, urged thereto by the old nomadic instinct, go far afield in search of what they could discover in their own bailiwick if only they took the trouble to look. For years after the Klondike was struck, hundreds, even thousands, of men walked scornfully over some of the richest placer ground in the region, which lay within one day's walk of Dawson City, to reach a fabled Golconda a few hundred miles at the back of the beyond. And although hardship with a capital "H" was endured by these invaders of the unknown, you have yet to hear other than pleasant reminiscences from one of them.

For years Cinnabar Creek had been the

butt and joke of old-timers in the Coldfoot district. In the early days, like hundreds of other creeks and gulches in the region, it had received some attention from a few prospectors, and these having failed to discover anything worth while, it was condemned. For years many men had packed and hauled their outfits up Cinnabar to get to grubstake diggings a hundred miles away.

Rich placer diggings will be discovered in Alaska a hundred years hence. Here is why. Prospectors are invariably poor. If they sink two or three shafts on one creek, which may perhaps be twenty miles long, and strike nothing, it is all they can afford to do.

Yet, twelve inches away from the bottom of one of their prospect holes, the ground may be as rich as their most preposterous dream. The bed rock may undulate ocean-swell fashion. If so, and the prospector bottoms his shaft on the down-creek side of this, the probability is that he will get a very slender prospect. And in the limits of a small shaft he cannot tell whether or no the bed rock is wavy. And drifting is slow work, and day by day his grub is getting lower.

Again, he may drop onto a patch or streak of greasy schist bed rock, in which case he may find a little gold lying on top of it, even a prospect in the gravel above it, but none in the bed rock itself, even though at one time gold may have passed over it. Too-solid formation; no riffle surface. Again the patient prospector moves on.

Ten, twenty feet distant the schist may change to a slate bed rock—which is a natural riffle—with a pay streak five to ten feet deep!

Luck plus energy is the winning combination.

IN 1902 Douse Fluker had sunk a hole on Cinnabar Creek, cursed it in painstaking fashion, hitched up his dogs and moved on. At Arctic City he heard of a strike in the Kotzebue country. The Kotzebue district lay as far to the westward from Koyokuk as Chicago is from New York, but the strike sounded good to Douse.

He went there. As a matter of fact during the seventeen years that followed, Douse's trails up and down and across Alaska might be made the basis of future highways in that territory. In 1919 he was back again on Cinnabar Creek, in the Coldfoot locality of the Koyokuk.

Maybe Douse Fluker had grown wiser with the passing years, but the probability is that he hadn't, because there is no end to Nature's surprises. She loves to keep a man guessing. And woe betide the man who, for five consecutive minutes, imagines he has become fluent in her language. A wave of her wand, and he finds himself on the booby bench.

Again Cinnabar Creek intrigued Douse Fluker.

"Dod rot my mukluks," he growled, "if I don't take another crack at you!"

So he repaired the bunk in an old cabin, set up his stove and went to work.

On the way back to Coldfoot from their summer sniping ground over on the Hammond, the old-timers gave Douse the laugh. A few tapped their heads significantly.

The early-fall frosts having set in, which makes for good thawing weather, he made good progress. On September 20th, at a depth of three-and-twenty feet, Douse turned over a large wash boulder in the bottom of his shaft and exposed a piece of bed rock. He picked up a piece of it in one hand and with the point of his candlestick explored the ginger-colored sediment thereon. One, two, three, four shotty colors of gold he segregated.

He stuck the candle in the wall and hurriedly began to fill his bucket with the dirt.

Fifteen minutes afterward he rose from the panning hole and held the pan to the light. In the bottom was a slender crescent of gold dust.

"Not rich," he made comment, "but Cinnabar Creek is my future home."

He staked a discovery claim and started for the little supply base on the bank of the Koyokuk. Even before placing his

claim on record, he hunted up all the old-timers, the prospectors and snipers whose incomes fitted their wants like strait-jackets, and told them of his find. At first these were inclined to ridicule him, but when Douse showed fight, and his prospect, they changed their minds.

Early next morning Douse led the aggregation of sour doughs back to Cinnabar Creek, where all of them staked. There was just enough ground and no more to go around; a few toward the head of the creek having short claims.

They stopped at Douse Fluker's place before returning to town and did a little panning. Each one got a prospect.

On the way back they agreed that the creek might turn out to be a good wage proposition. They placed their claims on record.

That night they gathered in the Arctic saloon and road house. In the pocket of each man was a small poke of dust, enough for bacon, beans and flour for the forthcoming winter.

Since the day before, the status of these old-timers had undergone a revolutionary change. Each was painfully conscious that he was the owner of a claim that contained pay of a sort. Millions, mebbe—such had happened before. They became restless and excited.

"KOTLIK" CONLEY was a wise man. He set up the drinks once and again. Within thirty minutes there wasn't a man in the Arctic saloon that wasn't worth a million, at least. For two hours Kotlik was kept busy weighing gold dust.

From the Arctic bar to the Arctic dance hall was but a step. To a man the old-timers took it. Here was "Beaver River Marie," "Forty-mile Kate," "Tanana Annie" and a half dozen other equally well-known characters. At a dollar fifty per dance of two minutes' duration, what with frequent visits to the bar, by four in the morning the sour doughs were cleaned out.

A splendid time was had by all.

Douse Fluker's strike was far-reaching. Coldfoot became too small for the lady element and their gambler escorts. They figured that Fort Gibbon would hit them just about right as a place to winter.

The Koyokuk being then too low for steamboat navigation—the headwaters, anyway—next day a big raft was built on which was set up a tent. The catamaran completed, a flag was nailed to a pole, and the pole nailed to the forefender.

Next morning the catamaran was boarded by Coldfoot's sportive element, and shortly afterward started down the river to the tune of "Casey Jones," played by the phonograph which had done service in the dance hall.

CHAPTER III.

WIOLA MERCEDES COLTRAIN.

NEXT day Taglo Charlie and Hardy Jim arrived at Coldfoot and drove directly to the office of the commissioner. Here Taglo thrust on his employee a fifty-fifty lease on Chub Gulch until June 15th of the following year. Here also he left the bulk of his dust.

While Hardy was putting the dogs in the kennel behind the Arctic hotel, Taglo entered the saloon, plunked a poke of dust on the bar and invited everybody to liquor up. His arrival was nothing short of a godsend to the score of sour doughs who had staked on Cinnabar, then allowed their enthusiasm to run away with the gold dust for their winter outfits.

Not until after the third round, by which time Taglo had at least arrived at the third heaven of delight, was mention made of the strike on the old creek. And while at any time that day before the arrival of Taglo any one of the old-timers would have sold his claim on Cinnabar for a sack of flour and a bottle of hooch—especially the latter, Kotlik Conley having cut them off sharply—warming under the genial influence of what had lately been in bottles, their enthusiasm regarding Cinnabar rose by leaps and bounds.

At the first mention of pay having been struck on Cinnabar, Taglo laughed heartily.

"Why," he told them, "I sunk a hole

on that creek myself not so many years ago, and all I got was a little flour gold!"

Things had changed since then. What Cinnabar was a week or twenty years ago had nothing whatever to do with what it was to-day, he was told. It was the comin' payer, betcher life! Hadn't Douse Fluker got fifty cents to the pan in the bottom of his shaft?

"A dollar it was, Taglo! And dirt that goes two dollars to the pan, Taglo—as you know—soon counts up. There ain't another creek in Koyokuk where you can pick up three-and-four-dollar pans! No sir-ee! You can count on forty dollars' worth of dust in every eight-pan bucket, Taglo. Mebbe more, y'understand, but fifty dollars anyway!"

And so it went.

When the dinner bell rang Cinnabar had Eldorado Creek backed over into Indian River. If the gold in liquor could only be extracted——"

TAGLO set them up again then drove the sour doughs ahead of him into the dining room. As he watched them eat, he chuckled. Kotlik Conley, he wagered with himself, would make no profit on this set-up. On rare occasions only did the old-timers eat at the road house. They couldn't afford to.

During the meal Taglo sifted the bar talk and concluded that no change had taken place in Cinnabar Creek. Douse Fluker had dropped on a little pocket, that was all. What did really concern him, however, was the fact that all his old friends were broke at a time of year when money was most needed. And there were twenty of them.

Could there be any more down at the Siwash Hotel? He thought not. The Siwash was the hang-out for the operators —not that any one was barred—by no means. At five hundred dollars apiece, anybody——

"And what are you goin' to do with your property this winter?" Taglo inquired on their return to the bar.

"Work it! Take out pay dumps, you bet!" This was unanimous. "But——"

The old-timers looked everywhere but at Taglo. He ordered cigars.

"Rabbit" Purdy broke the ice. Apropos of nothing at all he let it be known that he'd give a half interest in his claim on Cinnabar for a winter grubstake.

Taglo was elected. What, he asked himself, was ten thousand out of sixty? In order to get Hardy Jim out of the way he requested him to get to work on his raft. When Hardy had dropped below the bank Taglo led every owner of property on Cinnabar Creek down to the post and presented him with a five-hundred-dollar grubstake.

This, however, they refused to touch until he engaged to accept a bill of sale for a half interest in every claim, which necessitated a visit to the office of the commissioner.

An hour afterward Taglo was owner of half of Cinnabar Creek. He then hastened to help Hardy Jim with the raft.

"I was beginning to think you'd changed your mind about that trip to the Outside," Hardy observed.

"I won't leave till mornin' anyway," Taglo rejoined. "I was givin' a hand-out to the angels," he went on. "It's good insurance to have 'em on your side." He picked up a two-inch auger and set to work.

At four o'clock the raft was ready to take the water.

"Guess I'll start huntin' me up a man right away," Hardy announced. "It will take us close to three weeks to haul our outfit to Chub Gulch. Then there's the wood for the cabin and thawing fires to be chopped and hauled onto the claim—jobs I'd like to get behind me before the snow gets too deep and the weather too cold."

"That's the stuff, Hardy!" agreed Taglo. "The more gold you take out, the bigger the orange grove. But let's you and me go down and see what's doin' at the Siwash."

FIVE minutes, and they entered the bar of "Shagluck Pete's," place and were immediately struck by an unwonted si-

lence. In the light shed by two brass lamps that hung from the rafters the faces of the miners assembled in the room were marked by solemnity.

Taglo's invitation to drink died on his lips. He glanced inquiringly at Shagluck Pete. He was leaning across the bar, a lugubrious face in his cupped hands. Faint music struck his ear. Taglo gave a start, then shivered.

"Who's dead?" he asked Shagluck Pete in a whisper.

"Hs-s-sh!" came from a score pairs of lips.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Pete mirthlessly. "The hull danged camp is dead!" he cried. "The Siwash has run into a snag. What'll you have?"

"Hs-s-sh!" Angry eyes glared at him.

"Oh, go to blazes!" cried Shagluck Pete. "This has gone far enough! I'm goin' to wait on my customers in spite of all the culchured cooks that ever came outa the tropics!"

"What sort of a cook?" inquired Taglo.

"A month ago," began Shagluck Pete, glancing defiance at the miners, seated about the room, "'Kobuk Annie' guesses she'll quit an' go Outside an' monkey with chickens. Before the *Dusty Diamond* pulls out she promises to send me up a cook from Nulato on the *Dusty's* next trip.

"She did. She arrived ten days ago. A sort of freak, she is. She's got half a dozen different musical instruments and ideas about prohibition that don't belong in a road house in Koyokuk."

"So that's the reason why everybody's so disgustin'ly sober!" scorned Taglo.

Shagluck Pete nodded gloomily.

"Yape," he mourned. "This dame aims to sweeten up the lives of the lonely miners of Koyokuk with a tincture of culchure. When they're eatin' breakfast she yanks out 'Gooseberry's Sympathy in T' on a fiddle; for an hour in the forenoon she lectures 'em on the evils o' redeye; recites pomes by Blacking in the afternoon, an' at night casts their horrorscopes at an ounce of dust per cast.

"Talk about competition bein' the life o' business! An' to a man the bunch that hangs out here have fallen for her stuff! But if I fire 'er, where at this time of year am I to pick up another meat burner? Ha, ha, ha! Have another?"

Shagluck got the foregoing off his chest in fierce whispers.

Taglo had arrived at heaven No. 5; Nirvana was on the way. Shagluck Pete's world was under a cloud. Pete was his friend; therefore, it was up to him, Taglo, to shoo the cloud away.

"Let's you and me go in and put the cook wise, Hardy," he suggested. "Mebbe the poor woman don't know she's beatin' these boys out of their usual fall good time."

"No, no, no!" Hardy backed away. "Do you know where I can pick up a good man?" He addressed Shagluck Pete.

"Up at the Arctic you can take your choice," the latter replied. "All these guys here have got some sort of ground of their own."

Hardy Jim departed.

The idea of setting the world to rights still clung to Taglo's mind.

"What's her name?" he inquired.

"Wiola Mercedes Coltrain, she calls herself," Shagluck answered in a hopeless tone. "She looks it."

"Well, I'll go in and see what I can do," whispered Taglo. "I feel like a hunk of pie, anyway."

"I see your finish," prophesied Shagluck. "But go ahead an' try. She's free to look at. But ten to one you comes outa that dinin' room recitin' the pome about the statue that went on a bust."

Taglo straightened up and waved his hand.

"Watch me," he said, tossed caution to the winds, defied the miners with a look, and entered the dining room.

A FEMININE figure of considerable displacement was seated at a small organ at the far end of the room accompanying herself to the "Old Oaken Bucket."

Instantly Taglo forgot his mission.

Tossing his almost-furless fur cap on the table, he tiptoed forward and took up a position immediately behind the artist. He would make a duet out of it by singing bass. But in the moment in which he opened his mouth with the object of putting his resolution into effect certain movements on the part of the player caused him to shut it again; also, to place a hand over it.

Never in all his life had Taglo beheld a human being quite so busy. The organ was only about two feet high and afflicted with asthma, the heaves and a few other things. And the lady being tall beyond the average, in order to produce sound from the instrument it seemed necessary for her to manipulate her pedal extremities at a rate to have shoved a bicycle along at a hundred miles an hour.

It was the contrast brought about by this speed and the slow measure of the song that appealed to Taglo's sense of the ridiculous. By a frantic effort, however, he succeeded in keeping his mirth under control.

"That was great stuff, ma'am," he complimented Shagluck Pete's Nemesis as she finished the song in a hurricane of pedaling.

The player turned and favored Taglo with a smile.

At the moment ninety and nine women out of a hundred would have gone on record to the effect that there was nothing soul-matey about Taglo. As a screen star he would have hogged the camera as a Russian refugee, a past-grand refugee, largely owing to the luxuriant growth of whiskers which almost wholly concealed his face. A majority of those same ladies would have "placed" him in the upstairs bargain basement tagged: "If not sold in three days, will be given away."

But the hundredth!

"Thank you," she said, rising and offering Taglo her hand. "I'm sure I haven't met you before, Mr.——"

"Plain Taglo Charlie, ma'am."

"Have you"—the lady raised her eyes and glued them to a rafter above Taglo's head, and placed a hand over her heart—"have you," she breathed eloquently, "come from virgin open spaces, where the wild flowers nod and beck? From the distant silent places where the—the—"

"Pay streaks grow, by heck?" prompted Taglo.

"Splendid!" A second time she squeezed Taglo's hand. "And have you made a strike?" she asked hopefully.

"Took out sixty thousand this summer, and to-morrow mornin' I'm startin' down the river on a raft with the intention of takin' a trip around the world."

Taglo did not notice the start the lady made.

"Sixty thousand!" she breathed.

"I've just got fifty of it now, though," Taglo contributed for his listener's benefit.

The lady gave a sort of gasp and clutched at a chair for support.

"My heart——" The cook placed a hand over that organ.

"Could I borrow a piece of pie, ma'am?"

"Certainly—Charles," Viola replied with a kittenish smirk and, taking Taglo by the hand, she led the way to the kitchen.

CHAPTER IV.

TAGLO DECIDES.

HARDY JIM bustled into the Arctic bar and, because he was unacquainted with the men—he had arrived in the Koyokuk country just the spring before and gone to work almost immediately for Taglo Charlie—and shy to boot, made his wants known to Kotlik Conley.

"Who wants a steady job for the winter!" shouted the latter.

Nobody, so it seemed.

"We-uns are all goin' to work our prop'ty on Cinnabar," explained Rabbit Purdy.

"Where's the big guy that mushed into camp from the Chandelar country last night?" Kotlik inquired.

"Right here!" came a voice from the back of the room.

Hardy Jim and the man met behind the big tank stove. The man was undoubtedly big; also, he had a closely cropped

dark beard and something peculiar by way of a smile.

"Do you want to go to work?" asked Hardy in his deprecatory manner.

The man led the way to a table in the rear where they both sat down.

"I've got to work somewhere," he admitted, appraising Hardy out of the corner of his eye, "though I ain't," he went on impressively, "in any particular hurry. Couldn't you find a man down at the Siwash?" he shrewdly inquired.

"No, I couldn't. Wage workers are scarce, I guess."

The other said he believed it. "Especially since the guy with the sixty thousand struck town and grubstaked the Cinnabar bunch. Considerin' the state of the labor market, what would you pay a good man like me?"

"I dunno. I worked for ten myself, all summer."

" 'Tain't enough. But if you can find somebody else——" The speaker looked away.

"What would you go to work for?"

"What sort of pay have you got?" countered the other.

"I've got a fifty-per-cent lease for the winter on one of the richest pieces of ground in the region."

Hardy's listener was unimpressed. "Where is it located?" he asked with a show of indifference.

"Mushin' with a winter outfit it's three weeks to the northeast. Travelin' light it took Taglo Charlie—the owner of the claim—and me seven days to return ridin' behind the dogs."

"Isn't that the guy who hit the town to-day with sixty thousand?"

Hardy nodded.

"Any other mining going on over in that locality?"

"I don't believe there's a prospector within a hundred and twenty-five miles of Chub Gulch. I understand the district was pretty thoroughly prospected years ago, then given up."

"And where does this Taglo Charlie mean to spend the winter?"

Hardy supplied the information.

"Two men ought to hoist some money out of that claim between now and spring."

"Sixty-seventy thousand," declared Hardy Jim offhandedly.

"You stand to make a fair roll yourself."

Hardy admitted the fact with a smile. "The first real chance I've ever had in the country," he added.

"In the circumstances," drawled the man who had a corner on the labor market in Koyokuk, "twenty dollars a day won't make much of a hole in your share of the clean-up."

Hardy Jim thought the figure steep.

"At that you'll get away with twenty-five or thirty thousand," he was reminded. "And I heard just a little while ago that 'Old Man' Pratt"—mentioning the richest man in the region—"wanted a man to help him take out a dump on his deep ground this winter."

The speaker rose and made a pretense at a yawn.

"You're hired," decided Hardy Jim. "What's your name?"

"Joe Gilker. And look here: My pay starts the day we leave here."

"That's all right."

"And something else: You've got to pay me in full on the claim before we start back. From that moment each of us, as ye might say, is his own boss. All right?"

"Sure. We'll hit the trail early day after to-morrow."

"Uh-huh; and I forgot to mention a bonus."

"A what?"

"I've got to have a bonus of a hundred and fifty now as a fee for deciding in your favor. See?"

"Why, no, I don't," Hardy mildly objected. "I'll advance you a hundred and fifty on your wages, but——"

Joe shook his head decisively. "Got to be a bonus."

"You can tell me what it's for, surely!"

"I was on the Outside a year ago last summer and bonuses were all the rage. If you were a boss you paid a bonus, if a worker you demanded a bonus."

"But surely nobody paid a man a bonus *before* he went to work! That sounds to me like a bribe."

"Mebbe they didn't; but right now I need a bonus, whereas in the spring, havin' my winter's wages in my jeans, I won't. No bonus, no work."

"Well," said Hardy thoughtfully, "guess I'll think it over for a little while."

"That's your privilege," stated the king of labor.

HARDY went down to the Siwash. In answer to his query Shagluck Pete informed him that Taglo was visiting the cook.

Hardy canvassed the men seated about the room. All were small operators. A few of these he tempted with twenty dollars a day, and although a number of them weren't making half that amount on their own ground, they considered it worth something to be their own bosses.

Hardy Jim returned to the Arctic.

"All right; you get the bonus," he told Joe Gilker. He took a step in the direction of the gold scales set up at one end of the bar.

"Hold on!" cried Joe. "The situation now calls for a new deal. I've got to have twenty-two fifty a day and a bonus of two hundred."

Hardy Jim dropped into a rustic chair and did a little more figuring. Roughly, he discovered that he would have to pay Joe Gilker six thousand dollars for eight and a half months' work. He reasoned further that were he to work alone, he couldn't hope to get out more than one third the pay dirt the two of them could, because he would have to climb the ladder to hoist every bucket, and daily perform the other tasks that naturally belong to the man on top.

Besides, he didn't care to work alone so far away from neighbors. Sickness, a slip on an icy ladder, and—he simply had to have that orange grove!

"You win, Joe. Come on over to the bar and I'll weigh you out your bonus."

"And don't forget that I'm to be paid on the claim," Joe repeated as Hardy Jim poured eleven ounces of dust into an empty gold sack. "From which moment I'm my own boss. You see, I've an idea I may go out by way of the Kobuk country, take a short cut to Nome."

"Do I understand you to mean that you're goin' Outside next summer?"

"You've said it."

"I mean to go out myself," cried Hardy, a smile once more on his face. "But, of course, I can't go out the way you want to, because I've got to take Taglo Charlie's share of the dust over to Coldfoot."

"Of course," muttered Joe Gilker.

They parted.

Hardy Jim returned to the Siwash Hotel. He had been in the bar but a few minutes when Taglo Charlie stepped from the dining room.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed Shagluck Pete at sight of him.

Taglo's hair had been cut, and gone were the luxuriant whiskers. Six feet of rugged manhood had entered the dining room; a shrinking, furtive five feet and a half of yellow dog meat returned.

Glancing fearfully from side to side he slithered toward the door. Hardy Jim darted to his side. They passed out together.

"Wha-what happened?" asked Hardy.

Taglo Charlie started up the bank on the run. At what he considered a safe distance he came to a pause and waited until Hardy came up with him.

"Ain't it hell?" whispered Taglo in a quaking voice. "Honest to gosh, Hardy, if I was to stay another twenty-four hours in Coldfoot the commissioner would be sayin' 'For better for wuss' over me and Shagluck Pete's cook. As if anything could be wuss! Ha! ha!" he concluded mirthlessly.

"Well, what d'ye mean to do?"

"Get some supper at the Arctic; get my gold from the commissioner, a box of grub at the post, then hit my blankets on the raft. At four in the mornin' I'll start down the river. Which they'll be plenty daylight before I hit the rapids. I won't feel safe until I'm fifty miles from Coldfoot."

"A good wife——" began Hardy as they directed their steps toward the Arctic hotel.

"Forget it!"

"But matrimony is committed by most sensible people," declared Hardy.

"Then I'll be an idiot and stay single!" declared Taglo.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER FIVE THOUSAND.

ORDINARILY a gray dawn is conducive to a brand of philosophy the hue of lavender. No other hour of the day serves so well the man who wants to arrive at a fair measure of himself.

Wrapped to his ears in a short fur coat, a gloved hand resting idly on the handle of the sweep, Taglo Charlie drifted down the river at a six-mile gait and congratulated himself that his Eden was still Eveless. In the east a streak of dark blue gave hint of the dawn.

"Funny how women take to me," he meditated. "They couldn't glom onto me quicker if I had a sign 'Wife Wanted' about my neck."

The raft paused momentarily, went on again. "A snag," thought Taglo. "I'm free," raced his thoughts. "I've got fifty thousand in dust, and I'm on the first lap—so to speak—of my trip around the world." He smiled. "Got to look out I don't get frisked in Frisco or shanghaied in Shanghai."

The raft gave another jerk.

"The water must be lower than usual," he muttered. "This is September twenty-eighth. Guess I'm in plenty time to catch the last down-river boat at Nulato."

Taglo kept his eyes on the river ahead. Slowly, imperceptibly, the darkness lifted. He began to feel hungry and glanced at his watch. It was seven thirty. He resolved to go ashore at eight and cook up.

The sun broke through and flung its streamers to the winds. In the same moment Taglo received the impression that his raft had struck another snag.

He shifted his seat on his blankets and glanced behind him. He shrank, and words of some sort or another rattled in his throat.

Attached to his raft by a long rope was a poling boat, in the bow of which stood Viola Mercedes Coltrain, née Shagluck Pete's cook, the Delilah who had shorn his locks and removed the alfalfa from his face. In the moment his glance rested upon her the lady wafted him a kiss with the tips of her fingers.

"Oh, Charles," she cooed.

"Oh, hell!" echoed Taglo, turning his back upon her.

Viola wasn't endowed with an outthrust jaw for nothing. She began to haul in on the rope hand over hand. When only a matter of ten feet separated raft and poling boat she made fast, took a violin from its case and began to play a notorious wedding march.

Taglo didn't recognize it as such, but in a dim way sensed the meaning of the piece, whereat the curve of his back became more pronounced. Breakfast went out of mind.

"I've got to get rid of her before we reach Bettles," he resolved. "But how? I guess she don't know no more about a river or a boat than the law allows. And there's the rapids!" He started. "How am I to get her through? We'll be there"—he glanced about him—"in half an hour or so."

He turned and, without uttering a word or even bestowing a glance upon the occupant of the boat, he untied the rope, hauled the boat alongside the raft and made fast.

"Thank you, Charles," murmured the lady.

"Where you goin'?" he demanded roughly.

Viola looked surprised. "To the ends of the earth!" she breathed.

"Not with me, you ain't!" he informed her indignantly. "Just as soon as we're through the rapids you'll paddle your own canoe!"

The lady lowered her eyes to conceal the fires that leaped to life in them, but when she spoke there was no trace of anger in her words.

"Cruel! Cruel!" she chided him.

Taglo made no comment. He was watching the river ahead. Suddenly the bubbles in the channel—denoting depth—were superseded by a deceptive smoothness in the character of the water, and raft and boat shot ahead swiftly.

Momentarily the speed increased. His eye on the racing waters, his hands on the handle of the sweep, Taglo awaited the crucial minutes.

Raft and boat dipped, raced toward a black-browed rock. "Oh!" cried the woman sharply. Taglo put all his strength into the sweep, and the rock was passed with two inches to spare.

The two minutes that ensued were busy ones for Taglo, and fraught with danger to both. He pushed this way, pulled that way on the sweep. Rocks leaped out of the water and raced to the rear. Again and again it seemed to the woman that disaster was inevitable.

THEY were through. Followed a stretch of choppy water, then the roily river again.

Taglo shipped his long sweep and placed a short one between the tholepins. He moved to untie the boat's painter.

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Viola Mercedes Coltrain. "If I was you I'd let these ropes alone—for a while anyway."

Taglo straightened up and looked. In her hand the lady held a gun.

"What's the idea?" he barked.

Viola raised her eyebrows, showed the white of her inflexible jaw.

"I rather like company when I'm traveling," she answered coolly.

Taglo mulled these words over in his mind.

"Come again," he growled.

The lady leaned back and eyed Taglo thoughtfully, the gun in her hand pointed at a significant angle.

Receiving no reply, Taglo seated himself on his blankets and filled his pipe.

An hour perhaps they drifted in silence.

"My feelings are lacerated," he at length heard his companion murmur. "I have been insulted, and my trust shamefully betrayed. Thank Heaven, however, there's law even in this land! And juries everywhere are hard on monsters who trifle with the affections of ladies."

Taglo's pipe went out. He fancied himself under arrest and thrown into jail at Fort Gibbon. Next summer, after a long miserable trial, the judge would request him to hand over everything he owned to Shagluck Pete's ex-cook, then sentence him to forty years or more on McNiel's Island. A fine trip around the world!

Evidently the lady wasn't incognizant of Taglo's thoughts and feelings, for presently she went on: "And five thousand would pay off the mortgage, bring a little sunshine into my poor blind brother's life, and send my consumptive sister to a sanitarium."

"Aw, say now!" cried Taglo, instantly sympathetic, "if that's what you want the money for, I'll let you have it just as soon's we get to Bettles, where I can find scales to weigh the dust."

The lady placed her weapon on top of a suit case, covered her face with her hands and did as fine a job of sobbing as ever took place on the stage. At length she became sufficiently composed to inform Taglo that she had a set of scales in her suit case.

"What a great, good man you are!" she added, opening the aforementioned piece of baggage and digging up a set of gold scales. "But I see plainly that you do not like me any more. So if you will——" Here she was momentarily swamped by another flood of tears. "Then I shall proceed alone to Nulato," she concluded heartbrokenly.

Taglo weighed out five thousand dollars in dust, to receive which the lady obligingly produced a new gold sack. He then untied the boat's painter, wished the lady good luck, then paddled ashore to cook himself some breakfast.

"Her folks are certainly out of luck," was the thought that crossed his mind as the raft touched the shingle. "Well, at that, I guess I can see quite a hunk o' the

world for forty-five thousand," he added aloud.

"Who would'ave thought," laughingly whispered Viola Mercedes Coltrain about the same time, "that I'd pick up eight thousand in this neck of the woods in two weeks! I'll say, Alaska is one great country! I wonder how Joe is making out?"

Taglo, sound asleep on his raft, passed Bettles some time during the following night.

Early next morning Hardy Jim and Joe Gilker hit the long trail for Chub Gulch. Too, the sour doughs whom Taglo had grubstaked were as thirsty as wooden gods, for their benefactor had made no liquor allowance.

Rabbit Purdy it was who finally solved the drought by hauling up to the Arctic road house part of his outfit and disposing of it to Kotlik Conley for something less than half what it had cost. Then the old-timers were happy again.

CHAPTER VI.

CIVILIZATION.

TAGLO CHARLIE arrived at Nulato without giving away any more of his gold dust, and caught one of the last steamboats bound for Norton Sound. At every camp and post on the way down from Dawson the *Misner* had taken on passengers, and by the time the contribution from the Iditerod region was come aboard, there was scarcely room to turn around.

During the day, in every quiet corner was a game of some sort, for men accustomed to activity must have something to do to keep their minds employed. Taglo preëmpted a seat in a game of draw, and being among his own kind, and giving small pairs thumbs down, he flourished.

When on the fifth day out from Nulato the *Misner* rounded Crown Point and headed for St. Michael, on counting up his winnings Taglo figured that he was in excess of five thousand dollars to the good.

At St. Michael he gathered that several days were likely to elapse before the arrival of a south-bound steamer. And the island being an Eskimo reservation and fort, and as dry as the Sahara, even before the advent of prohibition, next day Taglo took passage on a power schooner for Nome, distant ninety miles across the Sound.

Here he disposed of his gold dust to a bank, and in return received a draft on a Seattle institution for fifty thousand dollars and about one thousand dollars in currency. As on a previous occasion, after purchasing a ticket on the first steamer to depart, he set out to see the town—a term interpretative of going from one saloon to another and sampling their stock in trade.

Shortly after setting them up in the Husky Dog, the words "massive intellect" reached his ear. He gave a start, turned his head and glanced over his shoulder. The place being filled with little groups of miners, mostly all of whom were talking at once, he was at a loss for some minutes to discover the man who had uttered them.

Then out of the babel he picked out "brilliant intellect!" and spotted his man. He and a smirking companion, a miner in new store clothes from hat to shoes, were seated on high chairs in a dark corner.

It was Joe, the man who eight years before had put Taglo to sleep in a shack on the beach, then went south with his thirty-five thousand. He was dressed in a neat khaki suit, and looked the prosperous mine operator.

TAGLO drew near and listened. What he heard by way of flattery during the next ten minutes caused him to blush with shame. And he had fallen for such stuff as that!

He essayed a glance at the crook's prospective victim. His look said as plainly as words could have done: "Yes, I've got a corner on brains, all right, if I do say it myself."

Taglo recalled that on the memorable occasion on which he had been the victim his face had been covered by a bushy beard. And as their acquaintance had extended only over a few hours, he concluded that Joe wouldn't recognize him

in the event that he decided to make the conversation a three-cornered one. He bumped into the two, apologized with a hiccup, then asked them to join him in a drink.

The miner acquiesced readily enough, doubtless for the reason that he wanted others to know how smart he was become of late; but the confidence man was shy.

"Thanks, pardner," he answered coldly. "We had one just a minute ago. Some other time," and he turned his back on Taglo.

For a few minutes thereafter Taglo was possessed of a desire to take the crook by the throat and shake the life out of him. Fortunately, saner counsel prevailed. Licking and exposing him, he reasoned, though calculated to spoil the scoundrel's present plans would, in the end, result in conferring upon him an invaluable favor. For Taglo had no witnesses to substantiate any charge he might make against the man.

He strolled out to the street to cool off, and by and by decided upon a course of action. And although this involved placing in the hands of another the rod of chastisement, which hurt him mightily, he at length entered the office of the marshal of the division and laid the case before that official.

"I don't give a toot now, y'understand," he said in conclusion "about the five and thirty thousand he dug outa me. But, by gum! I mean to see that he gets what's comin' to 'im this trip by catchin' him in the act myself. And this time there's goin' to be one witness anyway besides myself, for I'm goin' south on the first boat."

The marshal placed the case in the hands of one of his deputies, in whose company Taglo left the office shortly afterward.

By ten o'clock that night Joe, the human oil gusher, was safely lodged behind the bars, charged with the theft of eighteen thousand dollars' worth of dust from a Candle miner named Ole Swenson.

Taglo called it a day when the marshal requested him to be in court at ten next morning to testify at the preliminary hearing of the crook.

But some time before that hour a man knocked at his room door in the Arctic hotel and requested admittance. Taglo rose and complied.

"What's the idea?" he asked.

Taglo's visitor clapped him on the shoulder in friendly fashion.

"I'm an attorney," he made answer, "and I've been retained to defend a certain party you helped to arrest last night. After you get dressed, just walk along the hall to the parlor, where we'll indulge in a little talk."

Taglo entered the parlor ten minutes afterward, and to his astonishment came face to face with Viola Mercedes Coltrain. At sight of him she almost fell off her chair.

The attorney glanced sharply from one to the other. The woman rose and conferred with the lawyer for perhaps a minute. Then the man took his departure.

For some time thereafter the lady seemed at a loss how to begin. Finally she began to cry.

Taglo rose and reached for his hat.

"Oh, don't go!" she cried, rising and coming toward him.

"Well, say what you've got to," he answered. "I've found out by experience that time spent in your company comes high."

"The man you helped to arrest last night is my husband," she cried desperately. "The attorney thinks he can get him off if you say nothing about the old score you have against him on the witness stand this morning."

"Before me and you talk business of any sort whatever, go get me my five thousand in dust."

"Then you'll stay away from the courthouse this morning?" she inquired eagerly.

"Dust before business," he answered laconically.

Viola hesitated, finger at lip. "Wait here," she said finally, and left the room.

Five, ten minutes passed.

She entered carrying a black valise. This she placed on a chair, unlocked and lifted out what looked to Taglo to be the identical poke into which he had poured

five thousand dollars' worth of dust away up on the Koyokuk River, and placed it in his hands.

"It comes high," she said in rather a loud voice, "but——"

A door opened and the attorney and two other men stepped into the room. The former stepped up to Taglo.

"That settles your hash!" he sneered. "You appear in the courthouse this morning and I'll have you sent over the road for five years for accepting a bribe. We saw everything that took place."

On the way to the door Viola, who was the last to leave, turned and favored him with a Mona Lisa smile.

"Dub!" she said.

Taglo returned to his room, dropped the poke on his bed, wrinkled his forehead and picked it up again. Hastily untying the thongs he poured out part of its contents onto a piece of paper.

"Black sand!" he groaned.

Taglo breakfasted soberly, then took his way to the office of the marshal. The chief eyed him coldly.

"Made a nice mess of it, didn't you?" he sneered.

Taglo related his experience with Viola Mercedes Coltrain away up on the Koyokuk River. The marshal told him frankly he didn't believe him.

"Three witnesses saw you accept a poke of dust from her," he added, "to which they've already sworn. The attorney then had an interview with Swenson, who is now ready to swear—not wanting to be kept here all winter—that he was just giving the crook the dust to keep for him until this morning. And there you are."

Taglo untied the neck of the poke given him by the fortune-telling cook and gave him a free view of its contents.

The marshal eyed Taglo thoughtfully for a long moment, then shook his head. "You're either a damphool," he at length observed, "or as deep as they're dug. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt, however, and I'm advising you to watch your step."

It was a gloomy Taglo who returned to his room. Nor did he leave the hotel until next day, and then only to board the lighter to go out to the steamer which was anchored out in the roads.

"'S queer;" he soliloquized as he leaned over the ship's rail and looked back at the little city on the edge of the tundra, "up in Koyokuk we need scarcely any supervisin', but the minute a man gets into civilization his troubles begin. And I guess the higher the civilization the greater number of cops are needed to watch it. I wonder how long it would last without any?"

With which Taglo sought his stateroom.

CHAPTER VII.

TAGLO DOES SOME WRITING.

AT about the same time that Hardy Jim and Joe Gilker accompanied an exceedingly tired dog team up Chub Gulch, Taglo Charlie went down the gangplank from the steamer to the dock at Seattle, dodged the trucks and trains on Western Avenue, and finally came to a halt on First Street where it passes through Pioneer Square, afraid to move a step farther lest he get run down by an automobile.

He was in the act of wiping the perspiration from his forehead with the back of his hand when he caught the eye of an approaching policeman. He hastened up to him and asked to be directed to a hotel.

The guardian of the law gave Taglo the once-over, then asked him how much per day he was prepared to pay for a room.

"I ain't on to hotel prices," he made answer, "but I'll pay what's asked me in a decent place. I'm just from Alaska, and I've got in my pocket what they called a draft for fifty thousand dollars."

The policeman directed him to a hotel frequented by well-to-do Alaskans, and there shortly afterward Taglo discovered himself quite at home.

The bell boy hung around after showing him to his room. He was a pale-faced, slender, up-to-the-minute young man.

"Anything else I can do?" he asked Taglo.

"A heap," he replied eagerly. "Could

you get time this afternoon to go out with me to buy some clothes?"

"Sure. I get off at four. Stick around the lobby and I'll pick you up."

Taglo peeled a ten-dollar bill from his roll and handed it to him.

"Just sort of keep your eye on me," he said with a wink.

"Rye or Scotch?"

"Eh!" Taglo grinned and peeled off a second bill. "Rye," he said, passing it to the bell hop. "And say," he added, "if you were goin' on a trip around the world, where would you begin?"

The wooden face of the bell hop relaxed lightningly for a moment.

"Just leave it to me," he said coolly, and vanished.

Taglo nodded admiringly. "Smart as a whip," he declared.

The week that followed was spent largely in a praiseworthy effort to catch up on his deferred schedule of ham and eggs. On three of the seven mornings the sun had risen over the Spirit City he had made a resolution to start on his world trip, but by the time he had completely surrounded four fingers of amber fluid and two orders of the international breakfast dish with their customary fixings, the resolution was murmuring "No flowers."

Besides, the bell boy, who was his friend and confidant as well as his bootlegger, was strangely unresponsive to wide-world talk.

"Take it easy," he would say. "There's no hurry. The old world won't run away."

The manager of the hotel had identified him at the bank, the teller of which had presented him with a check book, even—this at Taglo's request—showed him how to make out a check.

IT was a great life, no doubt about it. Sleepin' on a spring bed was so all-fired comfortable. And what could surpass loungin' in a low over-stuffed chair watchin' the pavement pounders hurryin' forth and back and the automobiles and trucks scootin' and tootin' and honkin'?

But why in all hallelujah was everybody in such a rush? Gosh a'mighty! they made a man think that the days and hours were tryin' to beat 'em outa something or other!

Every other afternoon or evening his friend the bell boy took him out in what he called his bus, showed him the city and even succeeded in teaching him to drive, and ever he postponed his trip around the world.

When, therefore, he had sojourned a matter of two weeks at the hotel, and his pocket supply of currency began to get low, with the laudable idea of improving upon his caligraphy—atrociously neglected for twenty-five years—he decided that a little practice in the art of writing checks would do him no harm.

So one night before going to bed he filled out ten checks payable to bearer for sums that ranged from one hundred dollars to ten thousand dollars. These he spread out on top of the bureau in his room and stood back, pen poised, to admire them.

He felt particularly proud of the last one he had filled out, the one for ten thousand. His signature, Charles Tarbush, was, he declared, a lalipaloosa; a work of art and a thing of beauty.

He decided to give his friend the bell hop—now on the afternoon trick—a chance to admire his penmanship, so he pushed the bell button vigorously.

In the course of time the youth responded. With a boastful smirk Taglo called his attention to the array of checks on the bureau.

"How is that for a sour dough?" he cried, puffing with pride. "Pretty good hen tracks, huh?"

The bell hop bent over the blue slips of paper and eyed them critically for a full minute. He then inspected them first from one end of the bureau, then the other; cocked his head to this side, then to that, and wound up by examining each check individually.

"I'll say you can write!" was his verdict. "I'll bet you used to carry home the prizes when you were at school!"

Taglo didn't deny it.

"The first checks I ever signed, though," he modestly confessed.

"Tell that to the marines!" scoffed his friend. "I'll bet you've signed a million in your day. Do you think you've got money enough in the bank to make all these good?"

Taglo checked up laboriously and declared there would be a hundred dollars left over.

"Gee!" exclaimed the bell hop, "money's the stuff. But"—and he began to gather up the checks—"the chamber maids don't like to have the bureaus in the rooms littered up with paper, so I'll just take these along the hall and throw them in the wastebasket. Then," he concluded in hurried whisper, "I'll bring you up a bottle of the finest stuff that ever took your breath away."

"But that was good handwritin', wasn't it?" asked Taglo, the beggar's light in his eye.

"I'll say it was!" cried the bell hop over his shoulder.

Taglo seated himself on his bed.

"In a week," he assured himself soberly, "I'll be able to sign a check with Rockyford himself."

The bell hop appeared before him and placed a bottle in his hands.

"Drink hearty," he said in a low voice. "It's on me. And say; after I come off shift in the morning I'm goin' to run you over to Tacoma."

"Good," said Taglo.

The bell hop had Taglo in his bus by seven thirty next morning. They were some miles out of the city before Taglo remembered the slenderness of his purse.

"I should'ave cashed a check yesterday," he observed.

"This party is on me," the bell hop assured him. "You can cash all the checks you've a mind to to-morrow."

The bell hop drove the car over half the roads in King County before heading for Tacoma, where they arrived shortly after three in the afternoon. At a hotel entrance Taglo was requested to alight.

"You wait right here," the bell hop told him, "till I come back."

Taglo said he would, and the car was driven away.

When six o'clock came Taglo concluded that an accident had overtaken his friend. He had supper at the nearest restaurant, then took a car home to Seattle.

At his hotel he made inquiry for the bell hop, and was informed that he had failed to show up to go to work. This fact confirmed Taglo in the belief that something had happened to the bell hop, so he requested the clerk to call up the police station in Tacoma and make inquiry, but nothing came of it.

SHORTLY after ten next morning he presented a check for five hundred dollars at the wicket of the only teller in the bank whom he knew. That lynx-eyed gentleman glanced from check to Taglo.

"Just a minute," he said, and left his wicket. He returned shortly afterward with a small sheaf of checks in his hand. These he shoved across to Taglo. "Didn't you sign these?" he asked.

Taglo instantly recognized the checks he had signed in the hotel bedroom.

"I did," he said. "I was just practisin', and the bell hop said he'd take 'em and put them in the wastebasket."

"They were cashed yesterday," stated the teller crisply. "You've got a balance here of exactly one hundred dollars."

This amount Taglo secured with another check. Followed an interview with a bank official and a talk with a detective of the institution. The latter accompanied him to the central police station, where the matter was gone all over again. Taglo remembered the license number of the bell hop's car, which indeed was the only piece of evidence which the police considered amounted to anything.

Back at his hotel he told his story to the manager.

"Too bad," he made comment. "Let's hope the police lay their hands on the crooks before the money is all spent. For of course the bell hop had an accomplice. How are you fixed right now?"

"After I square myself with you I'll have just about ten dollars left."

"Best hunt up something to do," the hotel man advised. "Your room will cost you nothing until then," he added.

CHAPTER VIII.

LABOR TROUBLE.

HARDY JIM and Joe Gilker were about two hundred miles from anywhere, and the trail they had made was already closed. They were out of the world or, rather, they were the sole inhabitants of a world of their own; a democracy of two.

By a happy turn of fortune one of these was an employer; the other a worker for day wages.

On the day after their arrival on Chub Gulch they satisfied the god of work by stowing away the provisions, and late in the afternoon Hardy Jim set to work on the transposition of a roll of picture wire into rabbit snares.

"Do you like to hunt, Joe?" he inquired.

"No, sir, I don't," he retorted. "They's no money in it."

"Oh, but lots of people do things there's no money in," cried Hardy lightly.

"I don't!" intimated Joe with unnecessary emphasis.

"It doesn't matter," said Hardy apologetically. He wondered what lay back of the tone Joe had employed the past few days. "I brought along some shells for Taglo's twenty-two," he went on, "and tomorrow I'll go out and set some snares and make a try for a bag or two of ptarmigan.

"Until I've shot and caught all the fresh meat in that line I think we'll need during the winter, I'll keep the dogs chained up. After that I'll turn them loose. By spring I'll bet they won't be a rabbit within fifty miles of the gulch."

"Who cares?" growled Joe, producing a new time book and seating himself at the little table. "How many hours do you call a day, boss?" he asked.

Hardy eyed the speaker with astonishment.

"I dunno; I never thought of work in just that way," he mumbled.

"The law says," pronounced Joe, "that eight hours is a day for a miner. So every minute I work overtime will have to be paid for at the rate of time and a half. Do you get that?"

Hardy Jim shrank at the tone and the significance of the words. What sort of a man was this he had hired, anyway?

"Does that mean when it's your week to do the cookin' I've got to pay you extra for it?"

"I'll work eight hours a day for my twenty-two fifty," stated Joe in an uncompromising tone. "Over and above that, no matter what I'm doin', comes under the head of overtime. Now, on the trail I averaged twelve hours a day——"

"But almost half of that time," Hardy broke in, "was spent watchin' one half of the outfit while I went back for the second half!"

"I was doin' what you told me to." Joe pointed a pencil at Hardy and scowled. "So four hours' overtime goes down for every day we spent on the trail."

"What about the day we laid over when it snowed so hard we couldn't see?" inquired Hardy.

"Full time for me! I was there ready for work."

Hardy Jim was miserable, heartbroken with the turn affairs had taken. He was essentially a man of peace, one who all his life had been going out of his way to oblige others.

"It seems to me," he began sorrowfully, "that you might have mentioned all this before we started out. I hired you at twenty-two fifty a day—which is twice the amount anybody ever paid me—expectin' in return the usual day's work. And although no mention of hours was made, I'm certainly not the man to ask another to do what I couldn't get away with myself."

" 'Tain't never too late. I'm tellin' you now. I'll tell you something else, too, while I'm about it: I never said how long I'd work for twenty-two fifty a day. Do you get that?"

Hardy Jim was speechless for almost a full minute.

"But when you hire a man in the fall

in this country, Joe," he remonstrated, "and especially in a case of this sort, it's understood it's for the season!"

"Only slaves contract themselves!" snorted Joe. "It's my legal right to quit any time I want to," he declared belligerently.

"Surely, surely," rejoined Hardy in a pacifying tone, "but you might have told me."

"The claim's rich, ain't she?" pursued Joe.

"Yeh, she's rich," he replied dejectedly.

"Well then!" cried Joe, snapping shut his time book. "If I don't get thirty bucks a day startin' from to-morrow I'll go on strike."

Figures danced in the mind of Hardy Jim nearly all that night. Seven dollars and fifty cents more per day would mean two thousand dollars more in wages for Joe, and for himself a correspondingly smaller orange grove. But just suppose he ran out of the pay? Toward morning he fell asleep and dreamed that he stood in an orange grove staring at trees full of frozen fruit.

He rose in the morning hollow eyed.

"You get the thirty a day, Joe," he said as he placed breakfast before his hired man.

"'Sall right," said Joe.

In ten days they had sufficient wood on the ground to last them all winter. They then started to hoist pay; Hardy being in the drift and Joe on the windlass.

Came Saturday night. Instead of laying fires for next day's thaw, Hardy Jim climbed the ladder, went to the cabin and flung himself on his bunk. Having worked twelve hours a day for two weeks, he felt tired.

Joe had worked eight or less; never crawled from his bunk until breakfast was ready, never washed or dried a dish. On Hardy Jim's shoulders fell all the dead work.

"Ain't you goin' to light no fires to-night?" demanded Joe in a nettled tone.

"Why, no;" Hardy made answer. "We don't work Sundays—that is to say, we don't do any mining. You see, I'll have the week's bread to bake to-morrow. And we'll have our clothes to wash, and so forth."

"Is that so!" Joe sneered. "Huh; if you think I'm gonna come away out here into the wilderness to waste one good day out of every seven—throw away sixty dollars every week——"

"How sixty?" cut in Hardy in a tone of wonder.

"Double time for Sundays!" cried Joe. "And you'll get taxed up with it whether I work or not. And when I tax up anybody with anything, you can bet your last color, they pay. And if they make a kick—well, I've got nice little ways of collectin'."

"Sixty dollars for Sundays whether you work or no!" Hardy parroted.

"I've said it. The claim, you, and Taglo Charlie can stand it. I ain't the guy to turn away opportunity from *my* wigwam."

"Then," quoth Hardy, rising from his bunk and stepping toward the cabin door, "come on and lower me down the wood. We'll work to-morrow."

DURING the week following, Hardy encountered some particularly good pay. One night—unfortunately—he showed the result of a panful of dirt to Joe. He pawed the dust with a heavy forefinger, and eyed it greedily.

"They's five dollars there, ain't they?" he asked.

"Yeh, there's all of that, I guess," Hardy admitted smilingly. "I'll pull out safe on the lease, I reckon."

"And we hoisted seventy-five buckets of that stuff to-day," Joe mused aloud. "H'm."

"Oh, but this pan was from the top of bed rock!" exclaimed Hardy. "The dirt won't average anything like five dollars to the pan straight through!" he added with what earnestness he could muster.

"Will it go half that?" inquired Joe shrewdly.

"I set it down at two and a half to the bucket—though it may go a little better than that."

"H'm." And Joe said no more that

night. But in the morning he coolly announced that he had gone on strike for twenty more a day.

Hardy felt like screaming. Good-by orange grove!

"Fif-ty—dollars—a—day!"

"You'll make more'n that. But suit yourself; suit yourself. I'm on strike. Maybe you can hoist out the thaw yourself."

"I can't! And the waste dirt will freeze back and ruin my drift!" Hardy wailed.

"Well, you know how that can be avoided," cried Joe impudently.

Hardy flung himself on his bunk and wrestled with arithmetic. Still undecided, he rose and went down the shaft, doggedly shoveled back the waste.

Ten buckets he filled and hoisted. In the drift he could work without a heavy coat, but this he was obliged to put on before climbing the ladder to hoist the bucket.

When he saw that half of his thawed dirt was going to freeze back on him that day he stepped over to the cabin and called Joe to come to work.

"For fifty?" asked Joe.

Hardy nodded. "Do—do you think you'll be goin' on strike any more this winter?" he inquired.

"That all depends," quoth Joe noncommittally. "A man has got to make the most of circumstances," he added sententiously.

Hardy groaned and returned to the drift.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS CHEER.

WHEN a man is facing starvation he sees everything through the eye of hunger. And the man whose meals have always come regularly has missed making the acquaintance of an interesting branch of the Thought family about whose titles and accomplishments "Who's Who" is silent.

Taglo Charlie was sufficiently familiar with Hunger to slap him on the shoulder and call him "Hun" for short, and the occasions in the past when he didn't know where his next meal was coming from were innumerable. Such is a concomitant of the prospecting game.

But in those instances he was in an environment where he knew the ropes, and the first thing on the hoof that bore resemblance to a meal was his meat. Taglo could put on fat in a neck of the woods which would cause the shadow of an Indian to fade into nothingness.

But Taglo Charlie was now out of his element. Moose, caribou, grouse, rabbits, squirrels, fish—yea, even wolf and lynx—do not to any great extent meander about the streets of a city with metropolitan proclivities. Here there was no scarcity of food, but between him and it were plate-glass windows, the breaking of any one of which connoted policemen, patrol wagon, court, and jail.

Taglo could neither lay bricks nor rivet bolts. He could butcher wood, but wasn't a carpenter. The agent of the longshoremen's union wanted to see his card or a quantity of silver before he would allow Taglo to place his hands on the handles of a truck. Before going to Alaska he had been a hard-rock miner in Colorado, and had he ever become a mining king he would have chosen a pick handle for his scepter.

He had moved from the hotel to a lodging house two days after the bell hop had rung the changes on him. In vain he had haunted the police station; in vain hunted a job, though on one occasion he came within a "T" of becoming a helper to a plumber's assistant, but he made the mistake of fetching him the right one.

There came a night when Taglo crawled abjectly into his lodging house, tired from a long day of pavement pounding, supperless and with but thirty cents in his pocket.

When plying existence on your last dollar there's an excuse for recklessness. A state of mind has been arrived at which is a challenge to Fortune to bring on the worst, and be snappy about it. Let a man dole out his last few hundred pennies as if they were made of radium, and fret and stew and worry, and Fortune will rejoice and lambaste him unmercifully. But let

him take that handful of ex-newspaper money and throw it in her face, and she will say, humbly: "Sir, what can I do for you?"

NEXT morning Taglo invested his entire capital in breakfast food, then metaphorically snapped his fingers at the world. He stepped out to the sidewalk chewing a toothpick. A moment later a black prince swung his chariot to the curb, and came to a stop, jumped to the sidewalk.

"It's hell," he observed to Taglo, placing a hand to his forehead.

Taglo heartily agreed with the coal-truck driver. "Doin' some elevatin' last night, were you?" he added.

"All night," corrected the conveyer of black diamonds. "Honest, I'm scared stiff to go up First Avenue. The bulls would spot me. You don't happen to be able to drive a truck and lookin' for a job?" he pleaded.

Taglo told him what his experience in driving amounted to. "But though I do need a job in the very worst way, that ain't sayin' I'm eager to take advantage of another man's misfortune to pull me out of the hole."

"Wait till I get a cup of coffee," cried the driver, and hurriedly darted into the restaurant.

He was out again in a minute. "You get up into the cab and take the wheel," he ordered Taglo. "My helper quit last night. The job is yours if you help me outa this hole."

Taglo did as requested. The driver made him acquainted with the switchboard. Taglo drove slowly from Railroad to First Avenue and turned north as per instructions. When he had successfully negotiated the cross currents of traffic at Pioneer Square, the driver mentioned a Miner Avenue address, and promptly fell asleep.

Taglo rumbled along in line, and regretted that Hardy Jim and the Cinnabar Creek sour doughs weren't present to reflect and broadcast some of his surplus glory. Which reminded him that he was the owner of half of Cinnabar Creek, and all of Chub Gulch.

And as he steered the truck into Pike he wondered how Hardy Jim was comin' along, and if the old-timers had struck pay on Cinnabar. At which thoughts Taglo smiled, and in spirit hied to the Koyokuk and circled about the great silent waste of which Coldfoot was the hub.

The traffic officer at Third Avenue crossing felt called upon to bawl Taglo out for trying to dam the avenue current with his truck, but let him off with that. All that he had seen was a trail in the wilderness made by a dog team. He had been daydreaming.

Nostalgia seized Taglo. He grew faint. What sort of a world was this to live in, anyway! Skyscrapers and streets filled with rushin' cars and humanity at fever heat.

Oh, for his cabin on Chub Gulch! Oh, for a sight of the faces of his friends, a drink in the low-ceilinged bar of the Siwash, and the phonograph playin' that piece called "Dreamin'!" *That* was life!

Which brought him to the address on Miner Avenue. He woke the driver, who was profuse in his gratitude.

"Saved my life," he assured Taglo. "Now, if you want to help me unload," he went on, "your pay will start with this mornin'."

Taglo removed his coat and put on the one-piece overall suit and glossy black cap which the driver withdrew from under the seat, articles of apparel which wrought a revolution in his appearance. And even before he laid violent hands on the shovel, not a little of the grime from the suit had transferred itself to his face. Not even Hardy Jim would have known him in his disguise.

He was in the act of shoving the steel chute back into the truck when he caught sight of a face at an upper window of the adjoining house. Instantly he lowered his eyes and strolled around to the cab in the casual manner of one in complete control of himself. The face was that of his late friend Fred Mazurki, the bell hop, but paler than when on the job at the hotel.

IN silence Taglo piloted the truck back across the city, the dozing driver by his side. What should he do? Go to the police with his information? Was his fifty thousand dollars in that house? Would he get it back if he had Fred and his friends arrested?

Or would a set of criminal lawyers fall heir to it? No doubt about it. Hadn't he read in a paper where the leader of a gang of auto thieves had walked into court on the arm of the most expensive criminal attorney in the State, and who had got him off? He surely had. Who paid for the lawyer's services? Why, those whose autos had been stolen, of course.

"I want to get back along the Koyokuk just as soon as the Lord will let me," he muttered, "but I can't make a start without money. If I have these crooks arrested, I'll have to stick around here for six months or two years to attend the trial. Which doesn't appeal to me nohow. One thing I've got to do is to act quick."

He worked all day on the coal truck. At quitting time he asked the truck driver if he would do him a favor.

"Anything short of murder," that worthy replied. "You helped me out of a hole; I'll help you out of one a thousand feet deep."

Taglo told him his story.

"You help me get that money back and I'll make you a present of the finest truck in the world," he said in conclusion.

The truck driver spat on his hands. "When does the fun begin?" he asked. "I didn't tell you that along the water front I'm known as 'Mike the Mauler,' champeen bruiser of the truck driver's union. 'Sfact! My system of inducin' brain storm in a guy is an offshoot of lightnin'! Lead the way, brother."

But Taglo wasn't to be stampeded. The work had to be planned carefully. Considering that two heads were better than one he asked Mike how he would go about it. Mike said he would climb the front steps, smash his fist through the panel of the door, unlock it and——

"Get a shot in the eye," Taglo finished for him. "No, that won't do. We've got to use our gray matter. Strategy is the stuff. Scare 'em stiff in some way and get 'em on the run—as far's the door, anyway."

"I get you!" Mike whispered a few words in Taglo's ear.

"That might work," nodded Taglo. "Of course, we don't know how many men are in the house."

Mike slapped Taglo on the shoulder. "I'll bring along my roommate," he cried. "He's a blacksmith's helper with a wicked right. And if they ain't more'n six men in that house, it's by low, sweet chariot, for them."

SHORTLY after midnight that night Joe Chilanty, alias "Soapy Joe," woke, gasping for breath. Then he roused his wife, née Vi Chicora, alias "Violet Mercedes Coltrain," alias "Mag the Musician," et cetera, who chokingly inquired what the matter was.

"The house is full of smoke!" he cried, springing from his bed. "Must be a fire somewhere! Get up!"

He flung open a window, pulled on a bath robe, then darted at a safe which was camouflaged by some curtains. In the time it took his wife to get into a dressing gown he had succeeded in opening the safe and taking therefrom a black leather bag.

He sprang forward and opened the room door, led the way to the head of the stairs.

"The kid," gasped his wife.

"T'hell with 'im! Come on!"

Gasping and choking they raced down the stairs. A ray of light momentarily pierced the smoke. In the moment this went out Joe Chilanty was lifted off his feet with a blow on the jaw. He fell back against his wife, who presently landed on her head in the hall.

The light was turned on again. Mike the Mauler gave an order to some one in the cellar to fix the furnace. When Joe Chilanty and his wife came to they discovered themselves lying side by each on the floor of the front room, gagged and bound.

It was Taglo who carried Fred Mazurki downstairs under his arm, unconscious. Doors and windows were opened noise-

lessly. Presently the house was clear of smoke.

Fred the bell hop came clean. He had been approached by Soapy Joe and his wife, who had promised him ten thousand dollars if he would help them "get" Taglo. Plans were being shaped toward this end when Taglo kicked a goal, so to speak, by filling out the checks.

The rest had been easy. Fred was ordered to take Taglo out of the city while the checks were being cashed, and to lose him somewhere. Then all three had laid up. Fred concluded his story by swearing that he hadn't got a dollar out of it.

Under the light in the sitting room Taglo inspected the contents of the black bag. Sheafs of high-powered bills predominated; Liberty Bonds came next; bank books were third, and jewels fourth and last.

Taglo remembered that Joe Chilanty owed him thirty-five thousand dollars on an old account, on which not even a dollar in interest had been paid. Then there was the recent account of Viola Mercedes Coltrain. The jewels he tossed on the table.

Under threat the two crooks signed their names in certain of the bank books. After which their hands were retied, but this time not so tight as before.

Taglo figured that he got everything that was coming to him.

He and the bell hop presently left the house together. Mike the Mauler and his friend left shortly afterward and went north. Taglo and his companion came to a pause at the corner of Pike.

"You've got an even chance to make your get-away," he told Fred. "Duck, and go straight."

Feelingly, the bell hop promised Taglo that he would, and vanished.

Taglo picked up his assistants at the corner of First and Pike.

"Ain't I the little old Slam Weissenham, though, huh?" whispered the truck driver, admiringly, of himself. He rapped the side of his head with his knuckles. "Bean soup's the stuff," he rumbled.

"Choose your truck," rejoined Taglo. "She'll be yours in the morning. Think I can get a room at your joint?" he asked.

He surely could!

BY seven o'clock next night Taglo was, as he told himself, square with the Outside world. Mike the Mauler was in possession of a new truck, and the blacksmith's helper was thinking of ways to spend a thousand dollars.

In Taglo's pocket was a ticket for Seward, Alaska. The distance from this port to Coldfoot via the Iditerod Trail, the Yukon and Koyokuk Rivers, ran up to something like fifteen hundred miles. Had it been fifteen thousand he would have made a try at it, just the same. He had been something like four weeks in civilization which, according to his idea, was three weeks and six days too long.

Anywhere along the Yukon! Anywhere in Alaska within the arctic circle would be good enough for him for the rest of his life.

But what to do with his money?

A band turned the corner and played bravely as it marched up the square. Taglo had no great ear for music, but even he sensed that some of the instruments had too much to say at the expense of harmony. As they neared the corner where he stood, the players formed into a circle and brought their music right home to him.

During the course of the next hour Taglo gathered—not a little to his surprise—that Europe had no corner on hard luck. And while no mention was made of starving children, it seemed that not a few men were out of contact with work. Too, the percentage of misfits, unfits and those who had had stretches of hard sledding—oh, just the wreckage of once brave ships—was high for the time of year.

And Christmas was only five days off!

The eloquence of the chief speaker did not flow like the fabled silver stream, but was accented and made more intelligible by a free use of the argot of the streets. For in the crowd that skirted the uniformed circle were men of many tongues on whom fine words would have been lost.

Here and there Taglo marked a face stamped with bewilderment, others cast in the mold of sickness, pain, despair. And only two nights ago he, himself——

There was talk of turkey with all manner of fixings, tinsel and toys and seasonal folderols for the children. Which called up in the mind of Taglo thoughts and scenes from the deep bed rock of his memory.

Here was an appeal so sterling that no effort was required to grasp the philosophy of it. It struck Taglo between the eyes. An uncertain number of people were out of luck; needed a lift, a little boost. Nothing ambiguous, no Ethiopian in the woodpile. Shucks! hadn't he time and again played poker with old Hard Luck? The situation was perfectly natural. Taglo knew what to do with his money.

Next day he proceeded to do it. The first step toward the goal he had set for himself involved the purchase of a complete outfit for a full-grown inclined-to-betubby Santa Claus. There were visits to the newspaper offices which resulted in full-page advertisements and the bringing together of the heads of every charitable organization in the city.

After which things happened fast. Turkeys took their last ride by the truck load, candy stores and toy emporiums were denuded, a men's furnishings shop was left with nothing but alleged-silk hose, ditto shirts and white collars.

Taglo kept his disguise to the last. With tears in their eyes the high mukamuks—as he thought of them—told him he was an angel sent from heaven.

Taglo admitted it.

"Yeh," he replied, feelingly, "Alaska is God's own country," and modestly went his way.

Did Taglo get anything in his stocking? But he never missed it. Walking up Washington Street along toward noon he was forcibly boosted into a large store made over into a dining room, seated at a table with half a hundred other men and given a dividend on his investment in Christmas cheer.

Next day he left for Alaska.

CHAPTER X.

THE CLEAN-UP.

CHRISTMAS EVE on Chub Gulch wasn't such a joyful affair. At noon Hardy announced that they wouldn't work next day.

"Suit yourself," replied Joe. "Your holiday will cost you only fifty dollars."

"I suppose so," said Hardy with a deprecatory smile. "But somehow I always liked Christmas."

"Tom-fool stuff," Joe growled, bending over his time book.

As the days passed Joe Gilker paid less and less attention to what Hardy Jim had to say. Joe was the boss, though he still stuck to the formality of addressing Jim as such. Joe worked on an average about seven hours a day; Hardy seldom got by with less than a round twelve.

Hardy's day started at six in the morning when he rose to get breakfast, and seven at night saw him astride a dry pole making shavings for the next day's fires in the drift with the help of a draw knife. At least one third of the work he was doing belonged by right to Joe, who was the man on top.

Came New Year's Eve. After spending two hours on his time book, Joe took to pacing the cabin floor, his thumbs stuck in the armholes of his vest, on his face a vast frown.

"Look here, boss," he cried, pausing beside Hardy, "about how much money is there in the pay dump to date?"

Hardy Jim stroked a lean jaw. "I could make a guess, of course," he said, nervously, "but nobody really knows what's in a pay dump until after the dirt has passed over the riffles. The way we oldtimers arrive at it is to figure so much to the bucket according as it pans, then cut the total in two. A pay dump is the greatest gamble on earth."

"That gives me no answer," cut in Joe. "We've hoisted fifty-two hundred and forty buckets of pay dirt. How much will it go to the bucket?" he demanded to be informed.

Hardy Jim hazarded four dollars.

"Then there's over twenty thousand in the dump right now! Ten of that, let's say, belongs to Taglo Charlie; the rest to you. But me, who helped take out the dirt, have only about four thousand comin'! How about it?"

"For three months' work, Joe——" Hardy began timidly.

Joe waved that into the discard. "Ain't I as good a man as you?" he shouted.

"Surely, surely," Hardy hastened to tell him. "But, you see, Joe, I put all my summer's wages into the outfit and your bonus. And—and I work longer hours. If—if you wanted an equal share in this lease, why didn't you tell me——"

Joe leaned over Hardy. "I quit!" he barked. "Gimme my time!"

"I can't pay you until I get the money out of the dump," Hardy protested miserably.

"Then I stay here until I do get it! And from now on my wages are seventy-five a day, work or no work!"

"Orange grove!" laughed Hardy mirthlessly.

"What's that you said?" Joe took a threatening step and clenched his fists.

"Nothing, nothing!" hurriedly.

"Start any back talk with me," growled Joe, "and I'll push your face in."

"Certainly, certainly," said Hardy.

EVERY day during the remainder of winter was an eternity to Hardy who, ordinarily, was one of the happiest, most uncomplaining men alive. Dating from the foregoing conversation Joe Gilker came out openly as the boss, and Hardy Jim was his slave. It was "Do this." "Let that alone." "Shut up." "Hurry up with my supper," and so forth.

"How will it end up?" had become a perennial question in Hardy's mind. Taglo wouldn't arrive back in Coldfoot until some time after the Koyokuk was open for navigation—well along into June, anyway. Meantime, the pay dump would be cleaned up, but who would have the gold?

Would Joe Gilker stop short of murder to get possession of it all? Deep down in his heart Hardy Jim knew that his hired man wouldn't have to go to that length to get it. He would simply shove him to one side and take it; relay it on the backs of the dogs over to the Kobuk, and drop down that river on a raft; thence to the Outside.

Long before March first the orange grove had entirely disappeared from Hardy Jim's thoughts and dreams. He beheld himself standing on the horizon, old and bent, in one hand a shovel, in the other a pick. It was hell!

In the cabin of a night there was no conversation, no sulphurous game of cribbage which had been the order of the evening between Taglo Charlie and himself. Joe pored over his time book; figured and calculated; scowled and barked. Hardy Jim was too tired to do anything save lie on his back and stare up at the pole roof.

It was about the middle of February when Hardy informed Joe that he had practically run out of pay up the up-gulch end of the drift.

"There's come a change in the bed rock," he added. "I got only about five cents in this pan." He held it up for Joe's inspection.

"They pay all right on the lower side?" cried Joe.

"So far, but——"

"Out with it!"

"The bed rock's dippin'. I expect a change in that end too, shortly. Taglo Charlie will be mighty disappointed."

"To hell with Taglo Charlie!" snorted Joe. "He's at the other end of the world. And anyway, he got as much last summer outa the claim as would keep him fat the rest of his life, if he took care of it. Which I suppose he's busy blowin' it in."

"And I hope he's enjoyin' his trip," ventured Hardy with unwonted temerity.

"Is that so?" Joe sneered. "You just go cautious with your back talk, my little fella," he warned.

The pay in the down-gulch end of the drift got poorer and poorer.

"It really doesn't pay to hoist it," said Hardy. "What with your seventy-five a day——"

Joe raised his eyes from his time book. "To-morrow," he observed, "is the first of April. To-morrow," he went on, emphasizing his words, "I raise my wages to an even hundred bucks a day—no matter what sort of pay you've got in the drift right now. I know there's enough in the dump to pay me in full."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Hardy Jim. "Ha, ha——"

Joe Gilker took two strikes and knocked Hardy into a corner with a right swing on the jaw. He then broke Taglo Charlie's .22 with the ax and flung the pieces out into the snow.

Hardy rose slowly to his feet and stared bewilderedly about him.

"How d'yuh like it?" Joe taunted. "Now, if you want to get out of this affair with anything more'n a grubstake, keep your head shut—or I'll knock it off your shoulders."

"I—I didn't mean——" gasped Hardy.

"Shut up!"

"Surely, surely."

Along toward the first of May the smoke and gas began to hang in the drift, signs that the weather had become too warm for safe drifting by the wood-fire method. So one night after all the dirt had been hoisted Hardy Jim sent up the tools. The winter season was over.

"Listen, queer guy," said Joe that night after supper. "We've hoisted twelve thousand five hundred odd buckets of pay. How much gold d'ye say there's in the dump now?"

"Forty or fifty thousand," Hardy Jim returned with entire absence of enthusiasm. He wished the dump was cleaned up and the experience a thing of the past. "The pay ain't been good the last two and a half months." And what would Taglo Charlie say? he asked himself.

"And how long will it take us to clean up?" Joe wanted to know.

Including the time it would take them to make preparations for sluicing, Hardy Jim reckoned they wouldn't get through before the first week of June.

"Five weeks more, then," cried Joe, his pencil hovering above a sheet of paper. He made a few figures then sprang to his feet.

"D'ye know that I've got only fourteen thousand five hundred comin' to me right now, and that all told I'll be gettin' away with just about eighteen thousand for my winter's work?"

Being somewhat at a loss what to say, Hardy Jim at length said it was too bad.

"You're whistlin' it is," cried Joe. "But I can fix it. From now on I earn two hundred a day. I want to arrive on the coast with better than twenty thousand. And you won't catch me gallivantin' around the world with it, nuther!"

The announcement didn't interest Hardy. He believed that Joe had made up his mind to get away with everything and, after a fashion, had discounted his belief. He would start all over again. What region of the country would he try next?

Next day they started to make riffles for the sluice boxes—that is to say, Hardy Jim did. The weather being warm, and the snow packing fast, Joe seated himself at the cabin door and did what watching there was needed to be done.

AFTER shoveling into the sluice boxes for four days, on the evening of May twentieth the first clean-up was made. By ten o'clock that night the gold from this had been dried, blown and weighed. Roughly, it totaled something over nine thousand dollars.

"Put it here," cried Joe, holding out a gold sack a foot long.

"But Taglo's share——"

"Scoop it into this sack!" yelled Joe.

Hardy did so, tremblingly.

"I get paid first," Joe stated, tying the thongs about the neck of the poke.

Two more clean-ups Joe annexed.

"But I thought your wages would come to only about twenty-two thousand," Hardy mildly observed, just to see what Joe would say. "You've got over twenty-six."

"I know it. And I can handle it. You and Taglo Charlie can have the rest—mebbe."

"Whe-where do I get off at?" Hardy ventured.

"You're off long ago," Joe answered promptly.

In the afternoon of June fourth the last of the pay dump was shoveled into the sluice boxes. Hardy Jim reckoned the whole clean-up amounted to about forty-six thousand dollars. And nine tenths of this had been hoisted before March first. What remained in the claim wasn't worth hoisting.

Joe Gilker had given the order that Taglo's share of the dust be placed on the table in plain sight. He hadn't yet quite decided in his mind if the owner of the claim was entitled to a share of what he had hoisted out of the ground. He would see; he would see!

"I guess I'll need most of the dogs," he mused before turning in that night, "to carry my dust and the thirty-forty pounds of grub I'll need."

Hardy timidly reminded him that the dogs belonged to Taglo Charlie.

"Forget it," said Joe. "In the morning I start west, and you start east. I'll see what the dogs can carry," he decided with respect to Taglo's gold dust. And went to bed.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RETURN OF TAGLO CHARLIE.

ON the score of comfort, for over a month Taglo Charlie had been traveling by night, it being cool and clear. On his back was a light pack from which dangled a frying pan and a smoky lard pail. At his heels two pack dogs carried his staple food. In his right hand he carried a light rifle.

On his arrival at Bettles, after having walked every foot of the way from a future great city on Cook's Inlet, he was smitten with the idea of giving Hardy Jim a surprise. And, anyway, he wanted to see his cabin, his home.

So on May first instead of going on up the Koyokuk to Coldfoot, he started across country; with which region, in a large way, he was well acquainted.

"Some walk!" he chuckled as he turned into Chub Gulch about five in the morning of June fifth. "Some walk, but by the Lord I feel fine! I guess," he went on, as his eye alighted on the cabin, "that the guy that wrote 'Home Sweet Home' knew what he was talkin' about. I'll bet, too, he done some walkin' in his day."

Suddenly he stood still and gave a call. Six gray forms leaped to life beside the cabin and stood at attention. He gave a second shout, and they went toward him in long bounds, talking husky fashion meanwhile.

When they came up to him they rose on their hind legs and competed with one another for a lick at his face.

"Betcherlife," said Taglo, apropos of nothing at all. "Folks rushin' their heads off and livin' in coffins! Bah!"

Hardy Jim appeared at the cabin door. He had been lying awake in his bunk, his mind engaged in the task of asking nobody in particular why in the flux of human affairs "this" persisted in going the way of "that" and vice versa, when he heard Taglo call to the dogs.

At sight of the owner of Chub Gulch a slow glad grin lit up his honest homely face. He loped down the gulch in his bare feet.

"Well, well, well," cried Taglo, reaching for his hand. "And how is the boy? Darned," he added, after a close scrutiny of Jim's face, "if you don't look as if the little black fella had been perched on yer right ear all winter. How goes it, anyway?"

"Fine," was all that Hardy could get out. "Is the river open already?" he presently inquired.

"I guess she is now, but she wasn't when I left it."

"Then how did you get here?"

"Mushed!"

"But weren't you Outside?"

"Sure. Walked back. Took my time. Been five months on the trail."

Hardy Jim clawed air. "But—but your trip around the world?"

"Forget it! How did you make out this winter?"

Before essaying a reply Hardy Jim

threw an affrighted glance over his shoulder at the cabin. Ten minutes afterward Taglo was in possession of the salient features of his lessee's labor troubles.

"So your man earned twenty-six thousand this winter, did he?" the lessor inquired unsmilingly.

"No; he really earned only twenty-one thousand five hundred," Hardy corrected. "And he had no business to take the rest. I mean to ask him to return that thirty-five hundred, otherwise, I'll have worked for nothing this winter."

"'Simple' is surely your middle name, Hardy," cried Taglo. "Why, man, if you were to go Outside to buy an orange grove, they'd sell you a field of turnips. You mean to tell me that your man earned twenty-one thousand five hundred this winter and you didn't make your salt?"

"Well, you see, Taglo, I—I agreed—sort of—to his demands. And I've always kept my word! I should'ave told 'im to strike and be darned to 'im, but I didn't, you see. But I'm goin' to ask 'im to return that thirty-five hundred, because part of it is yours."

Taglo slipped off his pack and sat down on it. Taglo was a great little thinker on behalf of some one else.

"Got much grub in the cabin?" he asked finally.

"Enough to take the three of us back to Coldfoot."

"How much would you say it was worth?"

"I—I don't get you——"

"Give you a thousand dollars for it."

"Hoh! 'Tain't worth nothin' like that. Anyway, what d'ye want to buy it for?"

Taglo fished from his pocket a silver dollar and pressed it into Hardy's hand. "That," said he, "is the last cart wheel that didn't go around the world, and binds the bargain that you sell me what grub there's in the cabin and cache for a thousand bucks. Is it a go?"

"It's yours, anyway, for nothing, if you want it."

"You play altogether too liberal a game, Hardy," sniffed Taglo. "Let's go up and interview this king of gall."

Hardy seized Taglo's pack and they started up the gulch.

"Still asleep, is he?" inquired Taglo.

"He don't get up till breakfast's ready."

"Mamma's little boy, huh?" he sneered. "And the pay—she gave out on you?" he added. "Well, I've had my fling."

Hardy Jim told him he was certain the dirt left in the claim wouldn't pay to hoist.

"Well, there's lots of open ground in the country." With which words Taglo dismissed the subject from his mind.

TAGLO CHARLIE pushed open the cabin door and entered. Four steps brought him to the bunk on which lay Joe Gilker, the lord of laborers.

His eyes were shut, his mouth open, his nose busy.

Taglo flung back the bedclothes, grabbed him by the heels and walked away with him in the manner of a man with a wheelbarrow behind him. If in the process the back of Joe's head came into sudden and audible contact with the floor, that was something that merely proved that Taglo was either deliberately careless or grossly unproficient in the art of ejection. Joe was dragged ignominiously across the floor and deposited in the great outdoors.

Taglo returned to the cabin; whereupon, in swift succession Joe's belongings flew out the door, gold dust and all, even the full twenty-six thousand dollars. The pistol under the pillow Taglo shoved into his pocket.

"Now for some breakfast, Hardy," he cried cheerfully. "A stack of your famous flapjacks a mile high."

Nervously, Hardy Jim set to work to build a fire in the stove.

Joe Gilker rose to his feet, wild-eyed. Taglo leaned against the door jamb.

"What does this mean?" the former spluttered.

"What d'ye think?" Taglo countered. "I didn't want you in my cabin, so I put you out. In"—he waved his hand—"out. Savvy?"

Joe licked his thick lips and began to get into his clothes.

"All right," he blustered. "I was

through, anyway." He had caught sight of his pokes of dust, and his world had righted. "I'll need," said he, "thirty or forty pounds of grub. For which," he went on in the tone of a man who had been grievously insulted, "I'll pay you. Yes, sir, pay you!" He glanced at Taglo as if to say: "That's the sort of man I am!"

"Yes," drawled Taglo, "you'll pay for it. But I never open my store until after breakfast."

He entered the cabin and closed the door behind him.

Hardy Jim was stirring up the sour-dough batter. Taglo saw that he was ill at ease.

"You ain't gonna hurt 'im?" Hardy paused to ask.

"Who, me? I wouldn't hurt a fly!" declared Taglo with a righteous roll of his eyes. "But reptiles," he added to himself, "is different."

Hardy Jim started to fry the cakes. "You sit down," he invited Taglo, "and I'll let you have yours hot, right off the fire."

Taglo was in the act of carrying to his mouth the last of cake number six when the cabin door was pushed open a foot and the face of Joe Gilker appeared.

"Is breakfast ready, Jim?" he asked in the most civil tone he had employed since his arrival on Chub Gulch.

"Yeah, I suppose so."

"You forget, Hardy," Taglo interposed, "that I lately bought all the grub in this cabin. This jackal"—Taglo waved his knife at the face in the doorway—"can have breakfast, but it'll cost him—let's see—two thousand in dust."

Taglo deposited the piece of flapjack in his mouth.

"I'm entitled to my grub back to Coldfoot, or over to Kobuk!" cried Joe, just a trace of fear in his voice.

Hardy turned in the act of depositing another cake on Taglo's plate.

"Now I recall," he began mildly, "our agreement was that you were to be paid on the claim, after which we'd be quits. Wasn't that it?"

"But it was understood that I'd get enough grub to take me over to the Kobuk!" howled Joe.

"And I understood when I hired you for twenty-two fifty a day," Hardy retorted, "that you'd work all winter for that wage."

Pain, rage flitted across Joe's face.

"How—how—how much a pound do you mean to ask me for grub?"

"A thousand dollars!" blithely replied Taglo. "I believe," he went on in a musing tone, "that they's good money in the provision business—especially where you've got a corner on it."

"I won't pay it!" Joe screeched. "It's a—an outrage! Nobody never paid no thousand dollars for a pound of grub!"

"And since when did pick-and-shovel miners get two hundred bucks a day?"

"But I was only takin' advantage——"

"Same here," rejoined Taglo. "Now mush about your business."

Joe closed the door, then glanced wildly about him. He saw no loophole of escape. He had neither gun nor snares. Scarcely knowing what he was doing he made up a pack of his gold dust and blankets. He then tried to raise this from the ground with one hand, but was unable to do so. The hundred and fifty pounds hefted like a ton.

Joe seated himself on the pack with a groan. East or west, there were three weeks' walking to be done, during which time a man carrying a heavy pack can eat a lot of food. And if he were obliged to relay his load—good night!

By and by his eyes narrowed, and he smiled shrewdly. He would go down the trail a mile or so and cache the larger part of his dust, then return with the remainder and dicker with Taglo Charlie for three weeks' grub. Even eighteen thousand wasn't bad for a winter's work. And they could take eight thousand or nothing. He'd bring 'em to time!

AN hour later he appeared at the cabin door with the third sack. Taglo lolled on his bunk, smoking his pipe. Hardy Jim was making up a pack.

Joe stepped across the threshold and placed the poke of dust on the table.

"There's eight thousand dollars there," he said, indicating the poke with a stubby forefinger. "I'm offerin' it to you for thirty pounds of grub. Take it or leave it," he added loftily. "The rest is cached where you'll never find it."

"To show you that I'm a genuwine sport," rejoined Taglo, "I'll hold a bargain sale in this here store for the space of two minutes. I gives you thirty-five pounds of grub—which I figure you'll need—for the sum of twenty-five thousand in dust. Step up, ladies and gents! The sale lasts only two minutes!"

Taglo pulled from his pocket an ancient but serviceable nickel watch.

"Make it twenty thousand!" Joe begged. Taglo shook his head. "Twenty-two—twenty-three, then!" he wailed, but Taglo had a screw neck. "Twenty-four! Leave me decent wages, anyway!" he howled.

"You meant to leave Hardy Jim without a cent," Taglo coolly reminded him. "The sale will close in five seconds."

"I'll go get the dust," said Joe hoarsely.

TAGLO CHARLIE and Hardy Jim took their time on the way back to Coldfoot. Each carried a pack, as did every one of the dogs; and each possessed twenty-three thousand dollars in dust.

"How about that orange grove of yourn?" asked Taglo one night.

Hardy Jim smiled sorrowfully.

"D'ye know," he made answer, "I ain't pictured or dreamed of an orange for months? Joe knocked that idea out of my head."

"Guess you owe Joe something, then," said Taglo dryly. "You'd feel about as much at home on an orange ranch as I would drivin' a coal truck."

Coldfoot greeted them with music. From a phonograph. Which harmony proceeded from a board-sided tent known as the Arctic dance hall.

Taglo and Hardy, their packs still upon their backs, looked in at the open door. At sight of Taglo in the doorway a shout of welcome went up, and the dance ended suddenly. A score of men with glad, eager faces crowded about him, every one of whom tried to thrust into his hands a small poke of dust.

"Your share of the clean-up on my claim, Taglo," was the manner of their greeting. "Cleaned up twenty-five hundred!" "Three thousand, I did, Taglo." And so it went.

Thus Taglo came to know that Cinnabar Creek had turned out to be a fair wage proposition—a fine stand-by for the old fellows. At first he acted as if it was his intention to refuse what legally belonged to him, but finally he changed his mind and took what each one offered him, and placed everything in the dust line in the safe at the post.

"They'll come a time some day," he hummed thoughtfully, "when they'll need another lift. And if I'm anything of a guesser, that day ain't so far off, nuther."

Suddenly a glad light leaped into his eye. "I've got it!" he exclaimed, slapping his thigh. "I opens me the first bank within the arctic circle——"

"Fine!" approved Hardy Jim.

Taglo colored and fidgeted for a few moments. "But I draws the line at check books," he qualified.

"Certainly," agreed Hardy Jim.

"Now, let's go down and see Shagluck Pete."

They entered the bar of the Siwash hotel a few minutes later. At sight of them Pete, in his perennial week-old beard, gave vent to a wolf howl by way of welcome.

With a far-off look in his eye Taglo took in the fat tank stove, the comfortable rustic chairs, the ivory cribbage board on the card table, the smoky rafters, and sighed contentedly. Here was his idea of civilization.

"Set 'em up, Shagluck," he said softly, "then start 'Home Sweet Home' on the funnygraf'."

"I'm thar; both times!" cried Pete joyfully.

More stories by Mr. Strang in future issues.

Creases in the Trousers Aren't Everything

By Douglas Newton

Author of "The Daring Adventurer," "The Water Rats," Etc.

Steward Sobrinos and his brigand friend Haj Hamid put a lot of faith in the saving grace of Fatima's hand. But the third engineer of the *Olive Branch* enjoyed the protection of a stronger fetish—the mighty fist of "Grimy Doug."

ONE of the things that young Archie Buchan felt was against nature was that a lad who wore such perfectly creased trousers as himself should be subject to the authority of a creature with such abominable and baggy breeks as "Grimy Doug."

Young Archie was the bright son of an almost unwholesomely rich chandler. One of these days, when he grew up and recognized that marine engineering was a real man's trade and not an occupation for getting about the world and having a good time, he would be a nice fellow. Just about now he had much too much cash in his pocket, was much too young and much too much of a self-indulgent peacock to be really human.

He was third engineer on the *Olive Branch* for a few trips before he slipped into a billet on a crack liner de luxe. And he let all concerned, particularly Grimy Doug, know that his wallowing in dirt, as he called it, was only a temporary proposition.

Grimy Doug didn't mind that. He knew that boys would be cubs, and he knew how to deal with that sort of human nature. When Archie got superior he'd send him to wallow on his back in the shaft alley where the muck was particularly fruity and the buzz of the whirling shaft a foot above the eyebrows had a peculiarly humanizing effect.

Or he'd point out that a nice taste in collars and waistcoats might be a matter of great moral importance to the world, but what was wanted most in an engine room was men who had brains enough to prevent jiggers burning out and who

had the gumption to know when engines were running hard.

Archie, conscious of his cash and his important self, took these matters haughtily, but Grimy Doug handled him lightly for all that. The reason was that he had been as young as the third engineer himself, saw the likable core under the youngster's wildness—and liked the skipper and first mate.

The skipper and first mate worried about young Archie every time he went ashore, and, by grace of a letter of credit on a local bank, painted a port vermilion. The skipper was worried because old Buchan was a friend of his youth, and he had promised to look after the lad.

The mate's worry was deeper. The mate was a friend of Buchan's daughter's youth, and had a closer connection in view. Under the shining magnetism of Maggie Buchan's fine eyes he had given a promise which all sailormen know to be rash. He had promised to keep Maggie's brother unspotted from the snares, temptations, dangers and other wicked specifications of foreign parts.

BOTH the skipper and mate being totally unfitted to cope with wild young mules of Archie's stamp, they had put their trials on Grimy Doug's shoulders. Grimy Doug was Archie's superior officer; he was the man to keep the pup in order and out of mischief.

"There's nothing in me articles about my acting as children's nurse," Grimy Doug had grinned at them through a liberal top coating of grease. "I can drop me pearrls o' wisdom into the callant's ear, but nothing but anno Domini will teach him to prize them. You see I go to an inferior tailor, an' that deprives me of all moral force an' intelligence in his eyes."

"He's a young fool," snapped Foulis, the mate. "You've got to tell him he can't go cutting his usual capers in an Algerian port like Sook. It's too dangerous."

"For me to tell him," smiled Grimy Doug, his blue eyes glinting, "will merely make him cut an' caper the more. Don't you know what the bearing rein means to a colt, man?

"I'll no be so stupid as to encourage him with opposition. But I'll give ye a word of advice. Don't give that greasy steward Sobrinos shore leave here."

"Sobrinos!" barked the captain. "What's wrong with Sobrinos?"

"His face, man," grinned Grimy Doug. "It has a shifty twist. Also his moral nature is all knotty. Ye ha' not noticed, maybe, that it is when Archie goes ashore with Sobrinos that he hits his highest spots.

"Sobrinos, like many of the lower natives of Gibraltar, has a ripe knowledge of all the wicked sink holes of the world. Also he knows too much about Archie an' his cash value. A man like that, in these home waters of iniquity, is no fit bear leader for a wild thing like Archie. Stop his shore leave."

"I can't," said the skipper. "He's already gone ashore. He had important family affairs that he must deal with. He has relatives here."

"Then the situation is difficult," said Grimy Doug, suddenly grave. "I misdoubt any man's relatives in an old Arab brigand-and-pirate port like this. I'm thinking the next news we hear of Archie will not be the sort we'll like to take to old Buchan—or Maggie."

They spent an uneasy day unloading and loading with Arab dockers. At twelve o'clock that night Grimy Doug, or, officially, Douglas Dickson, chief engineer of the *Olive Branch,* rolled into the skipper's cabin, where the mate was sitting a picture of misery. He looked at the anxious faces, and said:

"No need for me to tell ye that Archie's shore leave was up at eleven an' that he hasna come aboard yet, I see."

"No," said the captain dully. "We know that. We know the reason. This is the reason."

He handed Doug a greasy bit of paper. On it was a flowery message written in English but in Arab style, stating the fact that the person of Archie Buchan had proved so attractive to the writer that he

could not see his way to part with the boy at the moment. In fact, so dear was this young Scot to the undersigned that he saw no way of relinquishing him unless under the pressure of a considerable payment—say five thousand pounds gold, English.

If such a sum was brought to Sook in six weeks' time the young man would be delivered up well and whole. Delay, the writer feared, would lead to the damage of the article under consideration. In seven weeks, for example, Archie would certainly lack one ear, and if payment was held over for eight weeks he would lack two—and so on through the body.

Any ill-considered attempt at rescue would undoubtedly lead to the same curtailment of features—if not worse. With instructions how to deliver the five thousand pounds, the writer signed himself, "Yours abjectly and meanly, Haj Hamid."

"I thought it," said Doug. "The boy talked too much of his rich daddy. Just brigandage was the natural result."

"Who's Haj Hamid? Let's get at him!" growled the mate, trying not to think of Maggie's eyes when she heard the news.

"You won't get at him so easily," said Grimy Doug. "He's the smartest journeyman thief in north Africa, with any amount of cunning and much political power."

"If he's known we'll go straight to the consul," snapped the skipper.

"Nay, Roderick," grinned Grimy Doug. "Think of Archie's ears! Consul, police —all that mumbo-jumbo are not only useless, but dangerous."

"What shall we do, then?" cried the mate.

"We'll let my well-known brain think," said Grimy Doug. And he proceeded to think, selecting a pipeful of the skipper's tobacco as an aid.

PRESENTLY: "This is a walled town. It's not likely they've got the boy away to the hills yet. Fact, they can hide him snug enough until the noise has settled down, and they can move him comfortably an' without annoying interference.

"Well, we'll say he's still in Sook. Hidden. We've got to find him. Ring for Sobrinos, Roderick."

"You're wrong about that man," said the skipper, hesitating. "He was back here by seven. I doubt whether he has a hand in this."

"Just ring, Roderick, I know he was back. He was proclaiming his innocence. I don't like innocence that has to be proclaimed."

Sobrinos was a furtive-looking brute in whom half a dozen Mediterranean strains, with Arab predominating, warred viciously. He was beautifully innocent. Asked where Mr. Archie Buchan was, he said he would go to Archie's cabin and see.

"Ay, ye've bin five hours aboard," grinned Grimy Doug, but his blue eyes were steely, "an' you don't ken whether he's on the ship or no. You're overdoing it, Sobrinos. We'll have the truth from ye. Where has this Haj Hamid hidden the boy?"

The half-breed's innocence was even more beautiful. He knew nothing about hiding, the name Haj Hamid was a matter of immense ignorance with him. He did not understand. Not a little bit.

True, he had met Mr. Archie in the town. He had, at Mr. Archie's request, piloted him to the Café of Dancing and Delight in the native quarter. But he had left Mr. Archie there—quite sober and well—about six, and knew nothing about his movements since. Nothing at all.

Grimy Doug looked at the fellow with glinting and disgusted eyes.

"So that's that," he said when Sobrinos had finished. "Worrds are no use. Think you two could bring him along to the engine room?"

A rather scared Sobrinos was taken protesting to the engine room. Once he tried to shout, but the mate, with memory of Maggie's eyes, clouted him hard on the mouth, and, being a person to whom physical pain was terrifying, Sobrinos promptly changed his mind about shouting.

Doug halted the party by the auxiliary engine that dealt with lighting, condensing and the like. His hand played skillfully and delicately over a crank plunging up and down in a slot of chilled steel. His eyes lifted and bored wickedly into Sobrinos, and Sobrinos, already green, began to sweat.

"Mark yon little crank well, Sobrinos," said Grimy Doug with a pur in his voice, and he laid a piece of iron across the slot.

The crank heaved up and down with resistless power, and the piece of iron was broken in two by the stroke as though it were no stronger than a piece of match board.

"Every time that crank heaves that happens," said Grimy Doug softly. "Understand, Sobrinos? Anything under that crank stroke smashes—an' the softer it is the more painful the smash."

His eyes were fixed on the trembling wretch, and his hand went out and shut off the engine.

"Going to talk, Sobrinos?" he asked genially.

"I know nothin'!" cried the man. "I swear——"

"Tie his hand over the slot, Roderick. Tie it, man, there's going to be a sad accident—as we three will be able to bear witness."

The skipper and Foulis caught Doug's eye. They hesitated for no more than a second. Sobrinos was shoved to his knees, his hand was forced to and bound across the slot—where the plunging crank would smash it.

"Anything to say, Sobrinos?" said Grimy Doug in a voice of steel.

"I swear I am innocent! I swear——"

"Right!" snapped Doug. His hand went out and caught the starting lever.

"No! No! Stop," screamed Sobrinos, groveling as best he could. "Do not start the devil engine! I tell. I tell you everything."

"Do it now," said Grimy Doug, his hand not leaving the starting handle.

"It is true," sniveled the half-breed. "The engineer Archie is held by Haj Hamid. He is a prisoner in Haj's house. The house is in the Street of the Riffs in the native quarter.

"The engineer Archie is there now. He will not be taken away for weeks. That is all I can tell you. I swear that I am not the guilty party."

"That don't matter—just now," snapped Grimy Doug. "Current facts are more important. Are there many men in Haj's house?"

"Many—twenty at least. It is a big house."

"An' a real rambling Arab one, I'll lay. Is it? Yes, I see, it is. How many doors? Two. One on the Street of the Riffs and the other—I see, on the Street of Fatima.

"Any other secret or otherwise exits or entrances through windows, walls, cellars or what not else? Don't lie to me, man, or I start her up."

Sobrinos, in real terror of Grimy Doug, and sure that the unexpected man with the now-gimletty eyes could read right through to the depths of his craven soul, did not lie. Fear of his hand being pulped and torn and shattered by that terrible crank robbed him of his gift of falsehood, made him a victim of simple truth.

He told that there was no other way out of Haj's house save through the Street of Fatima. He described the house. A blank wall at the back save for the little door on the Street of Fatima; a big, Moorish door at the front in the Street of the Riffs, and balconied windows on the first floor.

Archie, he explained, was in a strong room on the ground floor, a strategic point that would enable him to be whisked out of the back exit if trouble threatened at the front. It was the habit of Haj so to whisk, since the back entrance of the house was a secret.

WHEN Sobrinos was locked in the lamp room and the three back in the captain's cabin, there appeared to be no real light of joy on the faces of the skipper and the mate, despite all they had learned from the half-breed.

"And where *are* we, after all that?" moaned the skipper. "We know just

about as much as we did before. Knowing where Haj has got Archie tight isn't getting him out, is it?"

"Maybe not!" from Grimy Doug, behind him.

"I should think not!" cried the mate. "These Arab houses are practically forts."

"Ay," said Doug.

"No hope of breaking in."

"Nah!" said Doug.

"And twenty men—we can't tackle twenty men alone."

"Nah," mumbled Doug.

"Even if we tried," cried the skipper, "it'd be dangerous. Look how severe the authorities are on any interference with natives."

"Och, ay," rumbled Doug.

"And the authorities themselves—hopeless," cried the mate. "Hopeless! Will do nothing and worse than nothing. Archie will be cut to pieces before they can get to him."

"Ay," came the voice of Doug.

"Then where the devil are we?" began the captain, staring about for Doug. "And where the devil are you, Doug?"

Grimy Doug stood up so suddenly behind his seat that he was startled. The skipper gaped. The mate gaped. They saw things in Doug's hands. They both said at once: "What the blazes are you doing at the rocket box?"

Grimy Doug grinned softly, roundly, through an extra coating of dust.

"Just examining and speeculating," he smiled. "The contents of yon box mak's one recall old excitements. It mak's a man recollect that there was once a war on, an' that you, Roderick," he pointed an accusing finger at the skipper, "had the criminality, not to say the foresight, to forget to hand back your munitions, instruments and contraptions of civilized battle as law and orders in council ordained."

"What are ye havering about, ye lunatic?" burst out the captain.

"Just happy memories," grinned Grimy Doug. "I'm recalling that war—by these." He sat down and held out two objects to the astonished eyes of the others. "An' these reminded me that I have a fine, meaty stoker who did his war in the trenches, and was something of an expert wi' these wee things.

"An' all this being so, and me being the brains o' the conference, so to speak, ideeas flourish in me mind. Draw closer. I will commune with you."

A LITTLE after one o'clock that night four figures slipped off the *Olive Branch,* and walked quietly but quickly into the town of Sook, and along sandy streets to the native quarter.

The figures were those of the skipper, the mate, Grimy Doug, and the meaty stoker.

Despite his easy manner, his oil stains and his thick plumpness, Doug led them accurately through a maze of twisty alleys. He appeared to know the town like a book. As a matter of fact he did. He had been something of a "youth" himself.

Halting at a division of the ways, he said to the mate and the stoker: "Yon is the Street of the Riffs. You will find the house on the right, as Sobrinos described, by the brass hand of Hamid on the door. Stand in the shadows, out of sight. In fifteen minutes' time begin the grrand attack—ye mind all that?"

"You bet," said the mate with a chuckle. He was still a bit of a youth himself. The meaty stoker lifted the objects he carried and also chuckled.

Doug and the skipper struck through more queer, dark alleys and presently came out into a lonely street with a long, blank wall on one side.

"The Street of Fatima," Doug said, and he grinned. "I mind the time when, in a café at the end they had the prettiest dancing girls in Africa. Ay, they were that pretty. It's a street of real wickedness, this."

The captain gave a little shudder; he was thinking of his master's ticket. "I feel none too good about this business, Doug," he moaned. "If things went wrong, if the gendarmes came in—— You know what the authorities are about these things."

"Don't worry, man," said Doug. "I'll swear ye were doing no more than serenading Mousooma, the pretty daughter of Haj."

"Ye're a living scandal," said the skipper. "An' me a married man, too."

"Shiss," hissed Grimy Doug. "This'll be Haj's back door, I'm thinking." He looked at his watch. "The spectacle is due to start in two minutes."

In two minutes they heard a sudden, dull explosion, high up in Haj's house. Then they heard shouting. Then another and another explosion. Then violent knocking and all the outbursts of alarm and panic within the house.

WHEN they had reached the front of Haj's house in the Street of the Riffs, the mate and the stoker examined the façade carefully. After a moment the stoker said almost with contempt:

"All them first-floor winders is easy. Dead easy. But I guess that big one there looks the best. That'll be the one."

They waited in the dead-quiet street until the mate, looking at his watch, said: "Time!" The stoker thereupon leisurely selected one of the objects he carried, leisurely pulled out a pin, and with a curious overarm action threw the object up at the window.

"Bull," giggled the mate as he saw the object fly right through the window. They waited a few seconds. There was a dull explosion inside Haj's house.

Almost at once dense and terrible clouds of smoke came pouring out of the window. The shouting inside was just beginning to rise when the stoker threw the second smoke bomb, and immediately after the third.

The two explosions, and the terrific clouds of smoke that uprose changed the shouting and screaming in Haj's house to real panic.

"I guess that yelling is the Arab for 'fire,'" grinned the mate. "About time we joined the chorus."

He and the stoker thereupon dashed at the great door of Haj's house, began to hammer it hard, began to yell frantically.

They yelled the few words of Arabic and French Grimy Doug had drummed into them. Those words announced to the world and those inside Haj's house that the "fire" had been seen. It particularly announced to the inmates of Haj's house that the mate and the stoker were the police and wished to come in to rescue, put out the fire and generally overrun the premises.

The idea showed good hearts, but it was not at all the sort of thing that Arabs holding a prisoner to ransom wanted.

The panic inside the house took a newer note.

By this time Arabs had appeared in the street, and real gendarmes were hurrying excitedly up to deal with the supposed fire. The mate and the stoker, knowing that the attack on Haj's house would now be in good hands, tactfully withdrew before questions too pointed for their simple taste were asked.

In the Street of Fatima Grimy Doug and the skipper heard the growing uproar of the Arabs who thought their house was burning about their ears, with jumping nerves—well, the skipper's nerves jumped. Doug looked no more concerned than if he were being complimented on the way he had kept his coal bill down.

Presently he cocked his ear to some noise behind the door, nodded encouragingly to the skipper, and shifted a little on his feet.

The door opened quickly, and a tall, strong figure leaped through. He turned to yell in Arabic to others to hurry up before the flames caught them all; thereupon Grimy Doug came out of the shadow like a cat, and his fist struck like a ship's piston. The Arab went over sideways and lay still.

His shout had been very satisfactory. Two other Arabs, struggling with what seemed to be an inert bundle of carpet, came through the door. The first took the skipper's fist well and truly on the point. The second enjoying the full value of Grimy Doug's swing to the face, went backward like spring-heel jack through the door again.

There was a wild yell from the door and four furious Arabs tried to get through it to the bundle now on the sand outside. Grimy Doug was of the considered opinion they should not.

He occupied most of the door himself —and his spanner hand was busy. In it was a spanner. After the spanner had swung a little there was a marked dearth of stunable Arabs in the aperture.

Meanwhile, according to plan, the skipper was busy with a knife on the bundle of carpet. In a minute the bundle of carpet was no more, and Archie, rather stiff and blinking, was standing up in the night.

"All clear, Doug," yelled the skipper, and began to drag Archie down the street. Doug let out a whoop, slammed three times at three Arabs trying to rush him with daggers, found empty space where those Arabs once were, pulled the door shut, wedged his spanner through the ring handle so that the more the Arabs inside pulled the more they'd jam it, and with a not-too-hurried gait joined the skipper and Archie.

ARCHIE was a most chastened young man from thence on. The fact that unsuspected cunning and ability lurked beneath a suit of oily jeans now filled him with awe. From that day forward he was a changed youth; that is, he had become a man and recognized the value of Grimy Doug.

As for the mate, if he had served under Wellington he could not have been more overcome by the brilliance of the chief engineer.

"Some trick!" he kept saying. "They really did think their old house was afire when those smoke bombs became active. And I must say from the look of the thing they had the facts on their side. The only thing that remains is—what about Sobrinos?"

"I think," said Archie fiercely, "I should like half an hour's physical exercise with Sobrinos."

"Nah," grinned Grimy Doug. "Better leave Sobrinos to those relatives of his, Archie. They'll make it more interesting for him than you."

Thus it came about that just before the *Olive Branch* cast off from the quays of Sook, Sobrinos found himself released from the lamp room, found his wages in his hand, and his ditty box at the gangplank; he also found a very sturdy foot propelling him shoreward.

On shore he stood blinking until he saw Archie Buchan glaring at him from the *Olive Branch*. It was then that he realized that all would not be well with him in Sook.

The idea was made manifest by the approach of two ferocious-looking Arabs. Those Arabs had fell intent written all over them, and one look at them convinced Sobrinos that said fell intent was for him.

He began to run. The Arabs began to run.

The last sight the *Olive Branch* had of them showed them still running.

Another "Grimy Doug" story in an early issue.

WORKING UP

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN W. SUMMERS of Walla Walla in the State of Washington began to work his way up in the world before he was ten years old by dropping corn for fifteen cents a day while a man behind him, covering the corn with a hoe, kept shouting to him: "Hurry up, Johnnie! Hurry up!" That hurried "Johnnie" is now one of the finest two-fisted, upstanding, self-made men in Congress. During his life he has clerked in a village store, done farm work, taught school, traded cattle and worked his way through the Kentucky School of Medicine and the Louisville Medical College. After that he studied medicine in London, Berlin and Vienna, and came back to this country and practiced his profession for twenty-five years. He is also eminently successful as a farmer and fruit raiser.

Providence Goes Wrong

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "The Projection of Signor Penelli," "Macumber Combs the Air," Etc.

Old Bill Burrows had indeed found Dollar Ante; but it was his partner who produced the gold. And what Bill didn't know never hurt him.

OUTSIDE the shack that leaned like some decrepit tense listener toward the chattering headwaters of Dollar Ante, the doctor from the camp on the lower creek nervously packed his pipe. The operation promised a moment of respite, a chance to shake off the constraint which during those last few minutes within he had found himself powerless to conquer.

Was it too much to hope that he had not already betrayed himself to either of the two, to old Burrows or his black-browed partner? Could they have missed his start and his stare, the sudden chilling of his manner? Would there be any possible use now in an attempt to dissemble when they must know as well as he that he had stumbled onto their secret?

Greening—that was the doctor's name, though on the lower creek he answered to another—drew in a deep breath of the keen thin air. It buoyed him.

"I can't offer you cheerful news," he said abruptly. "Your friend Burrows is dying."

The man who called himself "Providence" Potter took the announcement placidly.

"You ain't telling me any kind of news," said he. "I've knowed Bill was dying for a month back; and knowed there wasn't nothing much a doctor could do for him. What I was aiming to find out is how long he's likely to last."

Even on the way up from Eight States Greening had found the man unprepossessing, liking neither his long and moody silences nor the unpleasant rasp of his voice when at rare intervals he spoke. A cold customer, he had thought; and now he felt the earlier judgment amply confirmed.

"You are right, Potter," he said stiffly. "Medicine can't help him. When lungs won't mend in air like this they're beyond mending.

"As to when you may expect the end,

I can't advise you—except to say it probably isn't far off. He may live a day or two, or a week or two. Not longer than that, I think."

The colorless eyes under the black brows narrowed.

"Two weeks, hey? You'll be coming back?"

Greening hesitated.

"If you think you want me, call me."

He swung into the saddle and drove a heel into the ribs of his little mare. Glancing back from the turn in the down trail he saw Providence Potter motionless at the cabin door, staring after him, his slouching long figure bent curiously into what seemed at a quarter mile the shape of an interrogation point.

Potter straightened when the doctor had vanished behind the great boulder at the bend. Inside the shack a querulous weak voice was calling again.

"Prov! Hi, Prov! You ain't goin' off anywheres?"

"Nope," replied Potter, and pushed in the door. "The day's about shot. Think I'll laze around for the rest of it. What's a few hundred more or less to plutes like you and me?"

THE man in the bunk struggled to an elbow. Fever burned in his eyes, and the flush of it flamed through his sparse, graying beard.

"What'd the doc say?" he demanded eagerly.

"Effect of it was," said Potter, "that we wasted ten simoleons bringing him up. But that's a small matter nowadays, hey, Bill?"

"What'd he say?" persisted the sick man.

"Hell! It's just like I thought. Ain't nothing wrong with you, barring a leetle touch o' ronkonkomitis. The doc agrees your lungs ain't what they used to be; but then, says he, neither's your eyes or your ears or any other part of you, if it comes to that."

"Thought I hear him say something 'bout a week or two," suggested the other with invalid cunning. "What was that?"

"That's when you'll be sure enough on your feet again, or the doc's a liar. In a day or two—catch that too, did yuh?—he says you'll maybe be able to set up."

"You ain't fooling me, Prov? Ain't sorta tryin' to whoop me up? You wouldn't be hiding it from me if I was bad off for health, would you?"

A shaft of murky sunlight, filtering through the oiled-paper panes of the window, found Providence Potter's face. He stepped quickly into shadow. The rasp in his voice became more pronounced.

"That's near to calling me a name, Bill. What makes you talk that a way?"

"The doctor, Prov. He acted kinda funny. One minute he was jokin' and the next he was all froze up. He stayed that way until you and him went out."

"Shucks. That was his way of hintin' the interview was over. Wasn't any too anxious to make the trip up here, I can tell you. He's working a claim down to Eight States, same's the rest of 'em."

A dry, wracking cough came from the bunk; then a chuckle.

"And same's we might 'a' been doing if it hadn't been for me smelling fortune higher up. 'Twas me found Dollar Ante, Prov, even though it was you that hit on the pay sand. Don't you go forgettin' that."

He sighed wheezily and lay back. "Durn the cussed luck! Thirty years I been lookin' ahead to this, prayin' for it, and now the good times is come—look at me! Only a day or two more before I'll be up, Prov? Honest? Won't I be able to get out and watch you workin'? Maybe rock just one single pan?"

"Maybe," grunted Potter. "Maybe. But I wouldn't fret none if I was you. We're both of us gettin' rich fast enough with one pannin'. D'you realize we've cleaned up close to ten thousand in ten days, Bill? That's faster'n the president makes his, and the whole cabinet throwed in."

Burrows struggled up once more and pushed back the lumpy bag of pine needles that was his pillow. On the blanket beneath glinted a little mound of yellow

sand. There was an hysterical sharpness in his laugh.

"Rollin' in it! Rollin' in gold! Didn't I always say that'd be the way I'd finish? That bandanna of yourn is tore, Prov. We got to get something stronger to lay up the dust in."

Providence Potter nodded.

"That's what. I was going to say it myself. And there ain't nothing strong enough to hold it proper, if you ask me, short of the bank in Phoebe.

"I'll tote the stuff down to-morrow—get a good early start and be back 'fore dark. Can't be too careful, Bill, us capitalists!"

"Careful!" Burrows' voice was shrill with sarcasm. "You call it bein' careful to go cartin' ten thousand in dust down the mountain after what happened to the Eight States bus last week! Where was your ears when the doc was tellin' us about it?"

Potter jerked a stubby thumb toward a gun belt hanging by a nail alongside the door.

"That's passport enough to see me through to Phoebe," he said. "But it's no use worryin' over the feller that stuck up the bus. He won't be lingerin' nowheres in the neighborhood of Eight States or Phoebe—or Dollar Ante Creek. Range'll be safe for ladies and children for years to come now, Bill."

"But not for no gold of mine—not for gold I've waited so long for. I want it here, by me, anyhow. I want to look at it and heft it, Prov. I'd like to get right familiar with the feel of it tricklin' through my fingers. You oughtn't to cross an invalid, Potter, and you know it."

THE dry cough shook Burrows again. Potter was scowling, but the shadows hid that from the man in the bunk.

"We'll see how you feel to-morrow," he temporized.

"I can tell you now," said Burrows. "I'll feel the same's I do to-day, the same's I did yestiddy when you started harpin' on moving the clean-up to Phoebe. The dust's safe here. Safe enough for me, and that ought to be safe enough for you."

Potter said nothing.

"Don't s'pose," remarked Burrows after a little, "that you thought of askin' for mail while you was down to Eight States after the doc?"

His partner's thin lips twisted into a crooked grin.

"Maybe I did."

"And——"

"There wasn't nothing for me."

Burrows became wistfully eager.

"What'd you be expectin', Prov? 'Tain't time for the Sears-Roobuck catalogue, is it? How about *me?*"

"You? Oh, there was a letter for you, Bill, come to think of it."

Burrows stretched forth a bloodless, trembling hand.

"From Mary? You ain't got to tell me, Prov! Give it here!" He snatched the envelope to him. "Writes purty, like a school-teacher, don't she, Prov? And young! You'd think it was a girl's writin', wouldn't you?"

It might, indeed, have been the writing of a very small girl. An unformed, overlarge, straggly hand. But Providence Potter manifestly found something admirable in it.

"Yep," said he. "Neat."

"Where is she, Prov?" asked Burrows.

"Back in New York, judging from the postmark."

Burrows ripped open the envelope. His fevered eyes gloated over the sentences laboriously marching along the lines of one full-ruled sheet and half of another.

"God, He only made one woman like her, Prov," he said huskily. "When I think of what she give up, what she might 'a' had if she hadn't—hadn't been Mary—it makes me feel little and mean. And as for you, Potter——"

Hastily yet humbly Providence Potter interposed:

"Don't rub it in, Bill. It's past twenty years now since I begun kickin' myself, and I ain't done yet. If you'd made a mistake about anything, or anybody, I wouldn't always be throwin' it up to you.

"You know how sorry I am, Bill. A long time, ain't it, since I had any but good words for Mary le Claire?"

"I ain't thinkin' about the present, Prov. But it's kinda hard to forget the past. A fool to fall in love with Mary, was I? Had her cap set for 'Rip' Coleman, did she? Couldn't think of nothing but pretty clo'es and plenty money, couldn't she?

"But I ain't blamin' you much as you think, Prov. You never could understand the qualities of womenfolks. Me, I knew Mary was different soon's I seen her. A girl in a dance hall, follerin' the camps like a thousand others—that was all you see. And that, mostlike, was all Coleman see. Bill Burrows' eyes looked clean through to her heart: it was as purty and sweet as her face, and true blue. Read me what she says, Prov."

Providence Potter fished a pair of spectacles with tarnished nickel-plate rims out of a baking-powder can and cleared his throat with an elocutionary flourish.

"It begins as per usual," said he, "the lady's openin' words being, 'Friend Bill.'"

A look of beatitude spread over the flushed face of Friend Bill.

"Ain't it like her?" he murmured. "Man to man all the time, that's Mary. No mush, no freshness like men get from these here up-to-date young flapdoodles. God, Prov! 'Friend Bill,' says she, and her never guessin' how near the day is when old Bill'll be settin' across the table from her lightin' his seegar with a fifty-dollar note and askin' her would she rather sail for Paree on her own yacht or——"

"'Friend Bill,' she starts," repeated Potter doggedly.

He held out the blue-lined paper before him at arm's length and read:

"Am enjoying good health and hope you are the same. Was glad to receive your letter. You are not the only one thinking of somebody, Bill. No matter how long it is, Bill, you will find me waiting.

"In your last I note that you seen a picture of me in the paper. Bet you was surprised. Yes, I have gone onto the stage. You would hardly know me, Bill, when I am dolled up for the show. I am playing the part of a rich society dame. The pay is good and you must not worry about me. I have always got along.

"I note what you say about expecting good luck on Dollar Ante. What a funny name. But serious, Bill, I got a hunch you will soon have better times when we can both be together. No, I never see Rip Coleman. The last thing I heard of him he was doing twenty years in San Quentin for having committed some crime. You was right about him, Bill, and I knew it when you told me. Only I was proud and did not like to give in I would not of treated you the way I did that time. No woman likes to bow down her head right off, Bill, before the man she knows was made for her. You understand now, Bill, don't you?

"Write soon.

"Your pal and sweetheart, MARY."

Providence Potter, quite obviously, was used to the rôle of reader and familiar with the preferences of Friend Bill. Without awaiting a request, he read through the letter a second time, much more slowly, setting off each word to itself after the fashion of the accomplished radio announcer. One might have imagined he shared his partner's pride in the literary gift of the portrayer of rich society dames, Mary le Claire.

Friend Bill's hand was waiting for his letter at the end of the second reading. He slipped it carefully into an ancient wallet which had reposed with the treasured, wealth-oozing blue bandanna beneath his pillow.

"Never knowed what I was lettin' slip when I passed up my chance for schoolin'," he sighed. "It didn't seem like I'd ever have use for readin' and writin' and other learnin'. But I'd give a lot to-day for an education like you got, Prov. I'd appreciate it a heap if only I——"

HIS voice trailed away. He lay staring at the unplaned rafters, clutching the wallet into the hollow of his chest. Providence Potter moved his three-legged chair across the cabin, propped it against the doorframe and applied himself to the twisting of a cigarette. He was manufacturing his fourth, giving no eye to the practised play of his fingers but looking off stolidly into the mountain purples, when Friend Bill spoke again.

"Prov! It's dark! I can't hardly see you. Is it my eyes?"

There was a dawning terror in his voice, but it induced no softening of Potter's.

"Hell, no!" he grumbled. "It's the time o' day. I'll light the lamp, Bill, if it pleasures you to look at me."

"That's right. Light up. Light's what a man wants when he's been laid up long as I have. Seems like bein' without it kinda gives me the creeps. The shadders ain't cheerful. They keep a-stirrin' unnatural, Prov. I don't like 'em.

"Set there by the table, won't you? Maybe you'd write Mary her answer for me now, Prov? I've been lyin' here thinkin' how to tell her till I'm all trembly inside.

"A thousand times, I guess, I've laid awake and writ her the letter she's goin' to get now. Had it down all smooth and fine, every word of it. But somehow since the day has come I can't exactly figger to say what I want to say.

"Got the pencil there, Prov? Got a point on, has it? Then start, 'Friend Mary.'"

Friend Bill clutched at his forehead with a wasted hand and knew the agonies of composition. A sentence came. He flung it out ecstatically.

"Friend Mary: You and me is rich and Providence Potter, my other pal, as well."

A long wait. Friend Bill ran his hand through his gray, unbarbered hair. There were four pallid spots in a row above his eyes where finger tips had dug into the febrile crimson, mining for words. As many another before him, he made an eventual meek surrender.

"You'll have to put it up into fancy language for me like you always do, Prov," he said. "Shall we tell her I been sick? But don't scare her. Just give it to her straight.

"Say I've had the doctor, and—well, say I'm gettin' around already. That won't be stretchin' it too far. What's a couple of days one way or other?

"After that go ahead and tell her how it was you found the pay sand, with me flat on my back. It's only fair, Prov. Only tell her, too, who it was that wouldn't be satisfied with slim pannin's down to Eight States—who it was that made the break for th' high hills and th' big bonanza.

"Tell her what we got up to now, and what's in sight. Tell her how we're hidin' out, sayin' nothing to nobody until we're sure of our own stake.

"Explain that to Mary, Prov. Explain it good, so she'll understand. Make her see we're goin' to let them Eight States youngsters in—and all our old friends, too—while Dollar Ante's still plumb full of gold.

"I don't want her to think I'm greedy, nor no whole hog. Remind her how many years me and you has been livin' on hopes and saleratus, and—you get me, Prov?

"And you tell her to stay right where she is, Prov. If she needs anything, if she's a little short o' money for a new silk dress, or a automobile or anything she thinks she'd like, tell her just to drop me a line.

"Finally, you go and make a date with Mary for me, Prov. Make it for two months from to-day. Tell her I'll be East then with a leetle piece o' solid-gold creek to sell at Wall Street, and a fur overcoat wrapped around me and a high hat on, maybe, and my face trimmed up distangay like the feller that used to be Prince o' Wales—and a ring somewheres about me intended for th' grandest little woman the Lord ever decorated the world with, the imminent Mrs. Burrows!"

A chill air blew into the shack. Friend Bill huddled down into his bunk and drew the blanket to his chin.

Bent awkwardly beside the guttering lamp, the amanuensis strove at his labors. Their progress was distinctly audible; often Providence Potter put the pencil to his lips and rolled the lead upon his tongue. However fancy the language in which he put up the message of William Burrows, it creaked as it went onto paper.

One closely observing Providence Potter would have noted that his eyes were as frequently peering over the rims of his spectacles toward the bunk as looking

down through the glasses at the letter sheet.

After a while he stopped writing, and lifted himself cautiously out of the chair that lacked a leg. He took a tentative step or two in the direction of the bunk which the doctor from Eight States had assured him would be his partner's deathbed.

Friend Bill stirred. His eyelids fluttered. A narrow flare of the fever fire lighted the strips between them.

"Done, Prov?"

"All done."

PROVIDENCE POTTER turned down the lamp, stood listening and presently slipped out into the starshine. For him stars held no interest. His blank gaze followed the trail down which Greening had ridden on the little goat-foot mare.

An hour passed before Providence Potter turned his back on the eloquent descent of Dollar Ante. Then for the first time since his emergence, he threw back his head and paid tribute to the pageantry of the night; and to the Marshal he made a profane prayer.

"Oh, Lord God," he whispered, "why can't the damn fool die to-night?"

In almost the same instant a voice that whimpered like a frightened child's called from the cabin.

"Prov! Where are you, Prov? Strike a light! The shadders!"

II.

THE lamp in the shack still was burning when the sun shot out of its slot between Quaker's Hat and Old Tawny and daylight poured in a dazzling flood into the valley.

Providence Potter, precariously balanced in the three-legged chair, dozed on. He was deep in the hard sleep of the first hour. Light could not rouse him. Sound did. A scampering of pebbles; the ringing of iron on stone.

The chair bobbed over, but Potter was then at the door. He was halfway to the bend in the down trail, and had halted to adjust to his person an item lately referred to by him as a "passport to Phoebe," when the leaders of the cavalcade made the turn.

One of them was Greening, the doctor from Eight States. With him rode a lean-jawed man who at sight of the figure blocking the way dropped his hand to his holster and reined up. A half dozen other horsemen appeared behind the two.

"Mornin'," said Providence Potter.

Greening ignored the commonplace. He nodded toward the rider at his side.

"This is 'Buck' Westerly from Phoebe," he said. "Sheriff Cudahy's first deputy."

Providence Potter's inspection of the person thus commended was, if not hostile, at least cold.

"Pleased to meet him."

The doctor shifted in his saddle.

"I suppose you know what this visit means, Potter?"

"I s'pose."

"We've come for our dust—and for you!"

At a sudden movement of Providence Potter's hand there was a similar convulsive movement of other hands. One of the horses executed a nervous jig step. More pebbles clattered down the trail. Providence Potter appeared oblivious to the flurry, and rolled a cigarette.

"I was sort of expectin' you would," he said. "I guessed you would after you'd been fussin' around Bill's pillow. Nobody could 'a' missed that combination of blue and gold."

Greening stared at him.

"And you ask us to believe you waited?"

"Judge for yourself. You wasn't thinking I'd leave Bill, was you? Why, we've been takin' in mountain scenery and doin' the picturesque American deserts together more years than you've lived, doc."

Westerly lifted his chin.

"Under the law," he said, "you got a right to be warned, Potter, that anything you say might be used against you. That's that. Sounds to me, though, like you been confessing to a crime. Or thereabouts."

"Or thereabouts," said Providence Potter. "No, I guess you would call it a

crime, at that. Though it was the first time in my life I ever went wrong—and nobody was hurt by it. That wouldn't make any difference, would it?"

"Not for me to say," replied the deputy. "Keep it in mind and ask the judge by and by. So it was you robbed the car takin' the Eight States' clean-up to Phoebe last Tuesday week? You admit that?"

PROVIDENCE POTTER took a final puff of his homemade smoke and dropped the flat stub at his feet.

"Sure it was me. How many wrong uns do you expect is prowlin' around these here virtuous Oregon mountains of yours?"

"One's too many," said the deputy. "Glad you're goin' to be sensible. No use makin' matters worse. Your pal in it, too, was he?"

It was Greening who spoke up.

"No," he said. "Burrows couldn't have been in it. Not actively. Accessory after the fact, perhaps. Don't worry about him. He won't live to be tried."

"Unbuckle that gun," directed Westerly, "and then you can show us where the dust is."

Providence Potter shook his head slowly.

"I ain't exactly ready," he said. "I was calculatin' on being allowed a little time. My partner he's dyin' in the shack there—dyin' in his sleep. He was shakin' all night with the deliriums, clean out of his head.

"Now he's got peace, and that's the way I'm aimin' he will pass out. Peaceable and happy."

"And I'm aiming there won't be any delay," said the deputy from Phoebe brusquely. "Throw off the gun, Potter!"

The right hand of Providence fell to the holster that sagged at his thigh.

"I hate like sin," he said, "to stand in the way of the law. It's worse'n goin' outside the law, like I done last week.

"The dust's safe where it is, Mr. Westerly. Nobody ain't agoin' to take it away; nobody never intended to. Soon enough it'll go back to them it belongs to. But listen good to this, all you people. It ain't agoin' from under Bill Burrows' pillow less'n Bill's dead—or Providence Potter is. You hear that plain?"

Westerly had been looking past Potter.

"Your pard's dyin', is he?" he queried. "You wouldn't hardly think it. Seems right spry."

A man in red flannels stood in the door of the shack, steadying himself with a hand twined in the latch thong. His voice came quavering down the decline.

"Prov! Prov! Quick! Here's Mary! All th' way from New York she's come—to clean out the shadders!"

Providence Potter swung sharply on his boot heel. His face had changed when he turned it toward the riders from Eight States again. His jaw sagged. The blaze of resolve had died in his unpigmented eyes. It was a futile, oldish man now who barred the way to Dollar Ante.

"He's gone light in th' head—waked up as cuckoo as he was before I got him t' sleep. You'd best see to him, doc. The rest of you—— I dunno."

The flaunter of red flannel called out once more.

"Company, Prov? Ask 'em in. Mary'll be glad to see 'em."

Without a word Providence Potter wheeled and toiled up the trail, his thumbs stuck into the gun belt, his head dropped low on his chest. Greening had ridden ahead; the rest rode in single file after Potter.

BURROWS had been persuaded into his bunk when the deputation from the lower creek clumped into the cabin, but he had balked at lying down. He sat cross-legged, with the blanket draped from his shoulders. His face was white and moist above it. The hectic glow had gone.

"Just you wait, gents," he invited. "My Mary's due back in a minute. Writes like a girl, she does—and danged if you won't say she looks like a girl. Wouldn't say nothin' about a lady's age. No. But me'n Mary's been pals past twenty years. Pals and sweethearts.

"Ask Prov! Mebbe he's told you?

Give himself the best of it, I bet. Want t'hear the straight? I'll give it to you. Providence Potter he was all wrong. A speck jealous, I guess.

" 'Bill,' he says, 'that girl you're a-sparkin' down to th' Eagle Dance Emporium ain't no good. She's mixed up thicker'n a Swede's head with Rip Coleman, th' faro dealer. Likes to likes. He's a crook, and so's she. They say she put a knife into a man once—not for love, but larceny.'

"That's what Providence Potter says to me, gents. And he keeps a-tellin' me.

" 'Why,' says he, 'she's married secret-like to Flinters, the barkeep over to the Barbary Cafee. I hear there's goin' to be gunnin' between Flinters and somebody over her. Don't get mixed in, Bill.'

"That was down to Silvertop a lot o' years ago. You know how gossip went in them camps and them days, gents. I heard plenty more'n I listened to, for I knowed the girl.

"Purty and sweet, she was. Course she made her livin' dancin', but Mary was one of them that can dance with strangers and be straight. A big-play actress in the East, she is now. I got a picture of her, cut out of the paper.

"Takes the part of society ladies, my Mary. You should see the joolry they trust her with. The picture shows her in her play-actin' clo'es, all dressed up like the Queen o' Cuba. Pearls on her neck, and di'monds on her fingers, and—say, she's even fixed out with eyeglasses with a handle to 'em.

"But I was sayin' about Prov. You know how a man gets when somebody's always keepin' after him. I couldn't help thinkin' more than I let on. One evening down to the Eagle I give Mary le Claire an idea what the talk was. I told her out and out that Coleman wasn't no fit society for her.

"Seems Mary didn't get what I was drivin' at. She got mad, womanlike, not at the gossips but at me.

" 'I don't expect you'll ever have any business of your own worth mindin',' she says. 'I'll pick my husbands and I'll pick my company, if it's just the same to you. And your company ain't any I want. In the future you stay away from me, Burrows, and dance on somebody else's toes.'

"It wasn't only a day or two after that when Mary and Rip Coleman was both missin' out of Silvertop, and Ed Flinters was runnin' loose with two guns; so it looked like a clear case, you see.

"All at once it come to me that life ought to be lived hard or not at all; and I was talkin' spiteful to the fastest gun fighter in camp, lickered to the ears, when Providence fastened onto me.

" 'Bill,' says he, 'I got wind of a new strike.'

"I sorta drifted out of the altercation, being in the state where a man don't remember what he's at from one minute to th' next.

" 'If it's in Africa,' says I, 'let's go.'

"Which shows how foolish a man'll be when he thinks he's been crossed in love. If I'd gone to any place like Africa, Mary's letter wouldn't never have found me. It come along a couple of weeks after Prov and me left Silvertop, and done a lot to pull me out of a bad sickness.

"Mary told me she wasn't lettin' nobody else know what had become of her.

" 'I left Silvertop,' she says in her letter, 'because I couldn't stand the advances of Rip Coleman and that Flinters no longer. I hear Coleman has left camp too, but don't you believe I ever cared about him or that I was married to Flinters.

" 'They's only one man I've seen in all my life that I could love—and I ain't goin' to tell you who he is, Bill, until you ask me personal.'

"Well, gents, Mary give me a place to write to her and I did. We been correspondin' back and forth ever since. Why Rip left Silvertop I ain't heard. Somebody did tell me last year that he'd bought up some lucky claims a long time ago and got rich; but I hear since he turned out-and-out crook and is doin' time in California.

"It was Mary I was tellin' about, though.

That her comin'—that singin'? We mebbe got a minute, anyhow.

"At first when she got East, Mary she went in the dressmakin' line. From reports she sent, she done right good. Whenever it was she went to play-actin' I don't know.

"She kep' it dark. Never let on a word until I come acrost her picture in the Sunday paper, and told her so. It's the only picture I got of her, gents. By and by, before she comes back, I'll show it to you. Hadn't changed enough so *I* didn't know her!

"Say, look at Prov, fellers! Better hang his head, hadn't he? Who was crazy—him or the man Mary's been a-waitin' for? That's what she's been doin' all these years, gents. Waitin' for Bill Burrows to make his pile and come down out o' the mountains to stay; never hurryin' me a cent's worth and never lookin' at no other man."

BURROWS stopped to cough, and the coughing brought the red surging back into his face. Westerly would have spoken. The doctor touched his arm, and shook his head warningly.

"Not now. Let him go on. He'll talk himself to sleep."

But for the man who had lost his heart in Silvertop there was no going on. His fevered brain had skipped a link; he had forgotten his subject, forgotten his audience. He looked wonderingly, belligerently, around the circle of strange faces until his eyes had come upon Greening's.

"Howdy, doc? What you doin' back? I don't need you any more, do I?"

"I don't think you do, Burrows," said Greening gently.

"Friends o' yours, doc? Yes; I've seen some of 'em down to Eight States. Happy to have 'em, doc. I like plenty company.

"They's things that ain't good to look at up there—in the shadders over the rafters. Hands reachin' down. But they don't dare come close to me less'n I'm alone.

"Prov, he can't be with me much. Not since we found Dollar Ante runnin' over with gold. No, it was Prov found that. I believe in bein' fair. I ain't even seen where he struck the pay sand, 'count of me bein' poorly."

The dry voice sank to a confidential whisper.

"They's miles o' the creek, boys. Miles o' gold. I guess mebbe I can afford to give you the tip. Don't waste your lives sweatin' for day wages down below. Come along up where the air's good and be millionaires with Providence and me."

Burrows pushed back his pillow. The pine needles might have been slivers of lead; the effort plainly taxed his remaining strength.

In the hours of delirious tossing the rent in the blue-bandanna treasure bag had widened. The top of the blanket was overspread with virgin gold.

"Purty!" he chuckled. "But I'm goin' to show you somethin' purtier."

Burrows fumbled through the wallet that held the tender confessions of Mary le Claire until he had come upon a photograph reproduced in the familiar brown of the newspaper picture supplements and now crudely mounted on cardboard.

Here was a woman of quite majestic dimensions and commanding eye, done in very trimly at the waist. Her gown, though built on a beamier scale than the proportions of the manikins most in demand require, had unmistakably the daring of Deauville. Even the Oregonian eye would recognize that it had cost some one a great deal of money.

The pearl necklace was largely in evidence; a necklace which in the rotogravure process, at least, looked astonishingly like the real thing. With one jeweled hand the lady held a remarkably gorgeous and formidable lorgnon, so poised that one would think she had suddenly become aware of the photographer in the offing and was about to obliterate him with a glance. Her other hand, also richly gemmed, rested on a long-shanked parasol whose ferrule was sunk in what seemed to be sand.

Well, indeed, might the theater manager needing to fill the part of a rich society

dame bow humbly before Bill Burrows' Mary le Claire. She was the thing to the life.

Perhaps it was a slimmer, younger figure that Bill Burrows saw in brown-tinted likeness, a handsomeness less faded and austere. Before the glory facing him his eyes blinked a bit and then closed. He pressed the picture to his lips and lay back. In a moment it slipped from his fingers.

GREENING stepped quickly across the creaking floor.

"I told you!" he said. "He *has* talked himself to sleep. The long sleep, Westerly."

Providence Potter rose from the crippled chair and walked to the doctor's side.

The change in his voice when he spoke was merely that it was not so loud. The rasp remained.

"Gone? Poor Bill. It's the first luck he ever had, doc."

Potter waved a hand.

"Now I ain't got any further objections to the law takin' its course, Mr. Buck Westerly," he said. "There's the gold—every grain of it." He tugged at the buckle of the belt. "And here's the gun. I won't rouse no disturbance. All I had on my mind has been seen to."

Potter put belt and gun on the table, but they lay there disregarded. The men from Eight States were looking at one another uncertainly. Even Westerly of Phoebe appeared to have arrived at a moment of indecision.

"A queer kind of case, this is, doc," he said.

"It is," agreed Greening. "You knew yesterday, Potter, that I——"

Providence Potter was rolling one of his thin cigarettes.

"I said so. Th' blue bandanna that Bill put the dust in ain't the one I used for a mask when I stuck up the bus, but it's th' mate to it. And the way you acted when you see it, with the dust spillin' out! You'd be easy pickin' in a poker game, doc."

Greening rubbed his rough chin.

"But you stood by. We mustn't forget that's a point in your favor, Potter. And there seem to be others."

"I ain't scorin' points," remarked Providence. "I went wrong, and I ain't denyin' it, am I? I thought th' Eight States' clean-up'd be easy to get, and I went and got it."

"And you salted Dollar Ante with it?"

"Not exactly. I didn't have to. I just kept the dust hid in a box and brought in a little of it every evenin'. Bill, he didn't know the difference. You should 'a' heard him go on these last ten days. If ever a man lived in heaven on earth it was Bill.

"The idea of bein' rich at last sorta made up to him for everything we been through. I knew it would—and that he was dyin' fast. It didn't strike me there'd be much harm in borrowin' the dust to give him a right send-off with.

"What did worry me was the way Bill hung on. Last couple o' days I'd been coaxin' him to let go of the gold so's I could use it over again on him. Told him I was goin' to take it down and bank it in Phoebe, but Bill, he was sot against it."

Once more Potter waved his hand toward the bunk.

"There's your dust, gents. You'll find it weighs right."

THE men from Eight States had gathered by the door. They were talking earnestly among themselves.

Greening presently disengaged himself from the group.

"We're inclined to pass over the fine points of the law, Potter," he said, a bit awkwardly. "We feel that in a way we've done you an injustice. The sense of the committee is that you're more entitled to a vote of congratulation than of censure. And Westerly sees no duty to perform."

Providence Potter's startlingly black brows drew closer together.

"You mean I ain't goin' to jail?"

"Not on account of any Eight States' dust, you're not. Just a minute, Potter. There's another thing. Burrows seemed to think a great deal of some one named Mary."

"You bet he did. She was all he'd been thinkin' of since Silvertop. Bill hadn't even been the same with me."

"You know how the lady can be reached?"

"Got an idea."

The doctor hesitated. A broad-shouldered young miner cleared his throat and spoke up behind him.

"Go ahead. Tell him."

"Look here, Potter," resumed Greening, thus reassured by his constituency. "This has been a most unusual affair. There are twenty-two of us who have an interest in that dust. Taking it individually it's a small matter. Those present are willing to take the responsibility of disposing of the shares of the others as well as their own. We know it will be all right. We want that gold to go where Burrows would have wanted it to go. We want Mary to have it!"

The crooked smile distorted Potter's lips as he met Greening's eyes.

"That's right noble of you-all, doc," he said. "But Mary she can get along without it. She's always got along good. Mary's that kind."

The doctor glanced at Westerly.

"I think I understand your attitude, Potter. But we *want* to do it. We intend that the lady's pride shall be spared. It can be made to appear that the money comes to her from Burrows—by will."

Providence Potter glanced at the thin figure in the bunk. He could trace the shadow of a triumphant smile beneath the beard.

"Poor Bill!" he said again. "I wonder if Mary'd remember him."

Greening's eyes widened.

"Didn't he say she'd been writing to him for——"

Potter threw down his cigarette and scuffed a heavy boot over it.

"Bill," said he, "couldn't read or write. I've been tendin' to both ends of the correspondence from th' start. First off I done a letter to kinda buck him up when he had a sick spell and didn't have no ambition to get better. After that I was in for it. It kinda got to be a habit, writin' letters and answerin' them. Seemed to keep Billy chipper."

Providence Potter followed the direction of the doctor's puzzled gaze, and plucked the brown photograph from under the white thin hand that rested upon it.

"Oh, that? You can see, doc, how it gave me a bad minute that day when Bill give a shout and says he's found Mary le Claire's picture in the paper. Lucky he didn't as much as know one letter from another, I want to tell you. I was sweatin' before I thought o' that."

Providence Potter solemnly passed over the picture of constant Mary le Claire. Beneath it, carefully cut out with the photograph, was a little oblong of type neatly boxed in. One schooled in journalistic formulas, reading this type, would have recognized that the newspaper with the brown supplement had generally a tendency to ocher. An irreverent hand had written the bold-faced caption.

"IN THE SWIM AT LAST! Her husband's mining millions have bridged the gap between Southampton and Newport after years of patient building and the Four Hundred welcomes as summer tenant of the handsome De Puyster villa—Mrs. R. I. P. Coleman!"

More stories by Mr. Rohde in early issues.

A GREAT BUILDING.

The War College, one of the most impressive buildings in Washington and characterized by its unique inner arrangement of rooms, was designed by Stanford White, the man whom Harry Thaw shot to death in a New York roof garden.

THE ALCOHOL CHAMPION.

Henry Ford uses more alcohol than anybody in the United States. The withdrawal-permit records in Washington show that he has to have 1,000,000 gallons a year for his artificial leather factory in Detroit.

A Chat With You

JUST before going to press we receive word that Ralph D. Paine has died suddenly of heart failure. He was a good friend of ours, a good friend of this magazine, a good friend of every one who reads it.

It was about this time of year in 1908, seventeen years ago, that we read a story in *Scribner's Magazine* that touched us with its wholesome human interest. It was about an old newspaper man—and we fancied that the writer was an old newspaper man himself, one who might be able to do us a few short stories. We sent for him and he came to see us. He had been a newspaper man but he was far from being old. Standing about six feet two, weighing about two hundred without an ounce of spare flesh, he looked the great oarsman and athlete that he was. He had been on three Yale crews, he had played on the varsity football team, he had been a war correspondent in Cuba during the revolution against Spanish rule and later in our war with Spain, still later in China in the war following the Boxer uprising. He had sailed the Seven Seas, been a filibuster with "Dynamite Johnny" O'Brien, and had traveled the old West when it was still wild. He was through with the newspaper business. He had married. He thought it was time to stop roving, to settle down in the country and write. We thought so too. It was the psychological moment for both of us. Before Ralph left the office that day he was regularly on the staff of THE POPULAR. In writing to him we had hoped to get a few stories—one or two. What we did get was a loyal friend, a gifted writer—and a strong and splendid inspiration, a lift up toward the right thing and the optimism and joy of life. If ever a man lived who had it in him to stimulate to better thought and deeds without preaching, to transmute somewhere between the lines of his stories the influence of a personality so kind, so straightforward and noble that it is quite past our powers to describe it, it was Ralph D. Paine.

* * * * *

HE wrote for us almost eighty short stories and about twenty novels. A manuscript from Ralph had an engaging quality. On the surface, it had an ingenuousness, a boyish simplicity. It had the art that quite concealed art. It appeared as if it would be as easy to write as it was easy to read. But if any young author reads this and doubts us, let him try to write a story like one of Ralph's. How easy, easy it seems—and yet how hard when one comes to try it! To the older readers of THE POPULAR we want to say this—that Ralph was just as good personally as the best of his stories.

"How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

Ralph was like that. He himself was a good deed on the part of Nature, or evolution—or whatever we may choose to call the mysterious force that reads for us our destinies and shapes our ends. And his stories are all good deeds. No one may tell how many discouraged, poor, helpless, hopeless fellows his stuff has helped over a rough place. But we hope—it is faith rather than hope—indeed it is certainty rather than faith—that it is all written to his everlasting credit and will shine forth somewhere in some great book that no mortal eye has yet beheld.

In future numbers we intend to reprint

a few of the old stories by Ralph. They are worth reprinting and we want the newer readers to get them. If you are an old reader and have any preferences, please let us know.

* * * *

ONE word more about Paine. He had the gift, an infinitely precious one—of wholesome laughter. It was not wit. There was nothing cynical about it, nothing destructive. It was the quality of humor that we associate with the ringing laughter of children, the jolly exuberance of moral and physical health. He has left it behind him as a legacy—not to a few, but to hundreds of thousands.

And so—here's hats off to "The Stroke Oar," "The Fugitive Freshman," to the college boy, the war correspondent, the splendid gentleman, the eternal youth that was in Ralph's stuff, that he was, and is and will be.

* * * *

FREQUENTLY we have requests from readers who want various back numbers. We would like to supply them all, but we ourselves cannot furnish anything for sale earlier than nineteen twenty-four. Now and then, however, we hear from various readers who are willing to sell out of their own files.

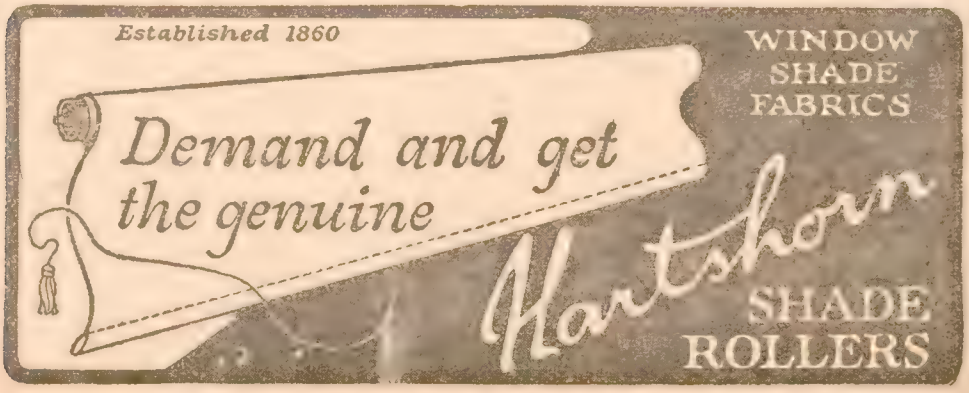
Charles E. Berry, No. 116 One Hundred and Twenty-sixth Street, South Ozone Park, New York, has this to say:

"I wish to inform you that I have every back number from September 7, 1922, up to the present number, and all in good shape. Expect to get about fifteen cents a copy. They are all in good condition."

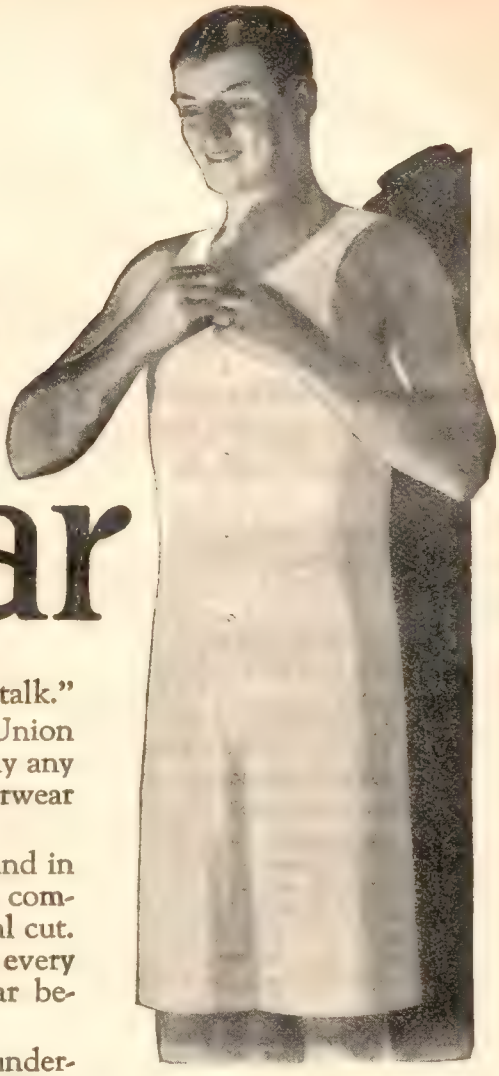
* * * *

NOW, so far as the next number is concerned, we think it quite up to the mark and maybe a bit beyond. The complete, book-length novel is by Clay Perry. It is called "The Timber Trail." No one who has never seen a log drive through swift water will ever have the ultimate thrill that comes to the rivermen unless he reads this story. We think it is a peach.

Besides this book, all in the one number, there is enough to fill the pages of any ordinary magazine. There is "Slow Motion," by Charles Tenney Jackson, there is a Mexican adventure story by Ernest Douglas. Also we take pride in presenting Mr. Robert McBlair with a human and charming story of negro life, "April Fool." Then there is Montanye, who takes his peculiar brand of humor out West this time. Hugh Kennedy carries us up North. Ray Spears follows with his tale of the sled dogs. Mildred Fitz-Hugh takes us out on the hunting field with the prancing horses, Douglas Newton takes us to sea, and Will C. Beale has another installment of his great serial, "Frontiers of the Deep." Altogether a number that should be ordered in advance.



One Dollar



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Turn a dollar into a Topkis Union Suit at your dealer's. You'll say any dollar that buys such underwear value is a loud speaker.

Here's fabric otherwise found in only high-price makes. Here's comfort-fit that comes from liberal cut. Here's careful tailoring. In every detail there's workmanship far beyond the commonplace!

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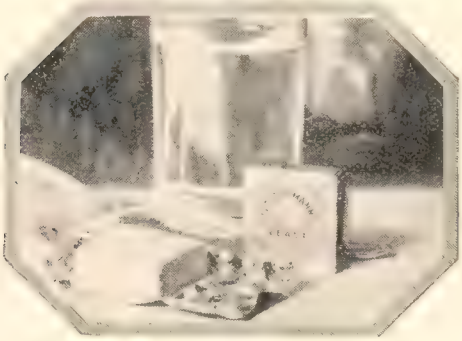
Eat two or three cakes a day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) night and morning.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-17, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.



THERE are many delicious ways of eating yeast—dissolved in water, fruit juices or milk, spread on crackers, or eaten plain.

"IN MARCH, 1923, I had what I supposed was a nervous breakdown. I was restless and irritable. I had headaches and dizzy spells. I began to use Fleischmann's Yeast. Gradually my ills disappeared—I became regular, and discontinued the use of cathartics. My energy returned—and in four or five months I was my former self. Not only have I regained my health, but my color and my general appearance have been improved."

MRS. MARGARET ADE SWEENEY, Roxbury, Mass.

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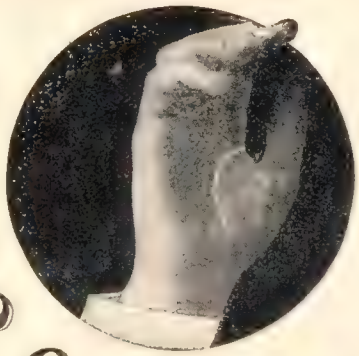

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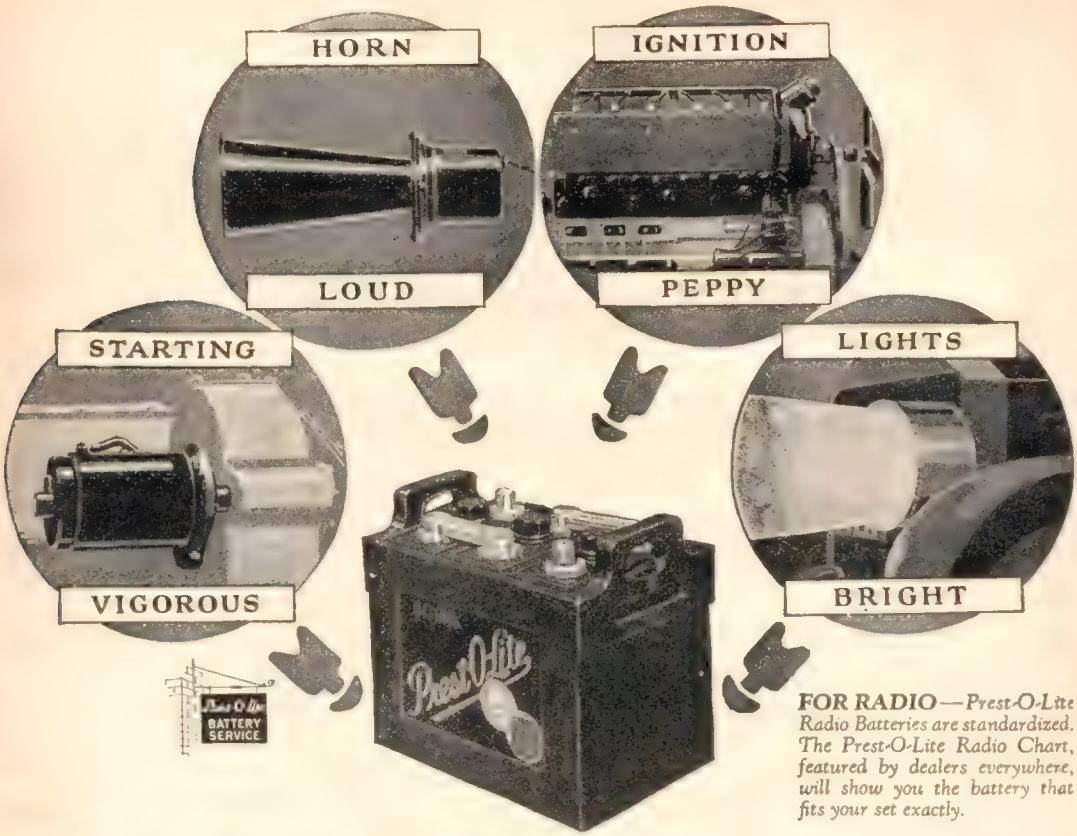

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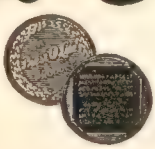

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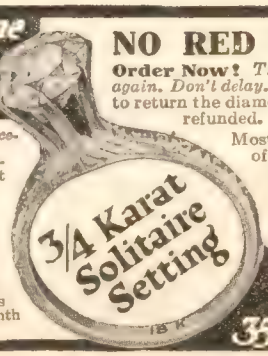

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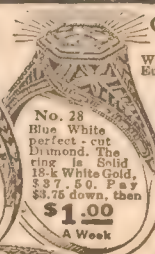

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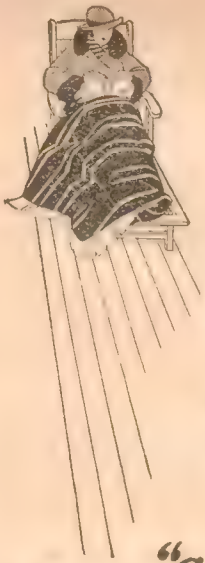

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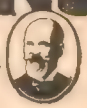

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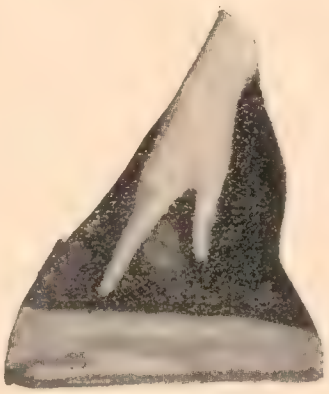

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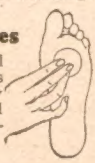

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